Museum Grants for American Latino History and Culture

Sample Application ALHC-258091-OMS-25

Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico

Amount awarded by IMLS: $316,983
Amount of cost share: $0

The Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico will undertake a comprehensive staff onboarding and professional development initiative to include all staff, volunteers, and docents. The project will establish a baseline for internal stakeholder-wide knowledge on core institutional topics and revise and improve the museum's existing protocols and materials for onboarding and new employee and internal stakeholder training. Dynamic onboarding modules will ensure that all employees and others within our community of internal stakeholders have comprehensive awareness of the museum's mission and vision, values, daily operations, roles, and responsibilities.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

Project Justification

The Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico (MAPR) holds to the standard of shaping the museum of tomorrow. Its leadership prioritizes investing in its most valuable assets—its people—building up their professional capacity and promoting their development with peer-to-peer learning opportunities and other support modes.

The proposed 3-year project is a staff onboarding and professional development initiative**: Internal Stakeholder Development & Onboarding Program**. The proposed initiative will focus on the museum's community of internal stakeholders, defined as both permanent museum employees (full-time and part-time) and a significant group of people performing employee-like functions and public-facing roles through a variety of relationships. Among this latter group of internal stakeholders are consultants and contract-based personnel, outsourced front-of-house service providers (security, gallery attendants, parking attendants, ticket office personnel, maintenance, and landscaping crews, etc.), volunteers, docents and other public-facing collaborators.

The project will align with the **ALHC Program's Objective 2.2** by focusing on training, professional development, and ensuring comprehensive awareness of the museum's mission, vision, values, and operational protocols. The initiative also addresses the ongoing staffing challenges due to economic downturns, high turnover, and reliance on temporary and contract-based positions.

The initiative is designed to: (1) establish a baseline for internal stakeholder-wide knowledge on core institutional topics; (2) revise and improve the museum's existing protocols and materials for onboarding and new employee and internal stakeholder training; (3) develop new, more dynamic onboarding modules; (4) ensure that all employees and others within our community of internal stakeholders have comprehensive awareness of MAPR's mission and vision, values, daily operations, roles and responsibilities, and more; and, finally, (5) provide regularly scheduled opportunities for their professional development through an annual retreat. These measures will ensure the museum is better equipped to support internal stakeholders, optimizing skills that weigh down individual and museum performance.

As MAPR approaches its 25th anniversary in 2025, the Museum seeks to close skill and knowledge gaps to boost internal stakeholder performance and further develop departmental competencies within the museum field—among them strategies for breaking down access barriers, audience building, sustainability, enhanced community engagement, and effective program co-creation. We strongly believe that focusing on these competencies will lead to improved community and worker satisfaction.

This people-centered project prioritizes MAPR operations and workers' learning amidst a funding landscape where audience-centered programs (such as exhibitions and public programming) is often more attractive to funding partners than initiatives focusing on personnel and people development, retention, and operations.

Recent studies document the difficulties faced by museum workers both nationally and locally (Puerto Rico) due to the pandemic, funding trends, and economic recessions. A survey by Museums Moving Forward found that 68% of art museum workers have considered leaving the field and 74% cannot always cover "basic living expenses" (2023). Moreover, it takes these workers an average of 12 years before receiving a promotion. The situation is even more dire in Puerto Rico, where the median salary in the creative sector is $26,627, significantly lower than the median salary of $59,428 on the mainland (Instituto de Estadísticas, 2020). These challenges have contributed to high turnover rates, especially among those earning less than $50,000 annually. Working conditions are, at best, challenging for the approximately 57,000 workers fueling Puerto Rico's creative sector (as per a 2023 study by the San Juan-based Centro de Economía Creativa).

Since 2014, MAPR has faced significant economic challenges. The museum has seen a substantial reduction in support from the Government of Puerto Rico, with funding dropping from $2,000,000 in 2014 to $1,299,000—less than the annual costs for utilities—since 2019. The collapse of the Puerto Rican government in 2014 resulted in the loss of an additional $1,000,000 in funding that covered most operating and maintenance expenses, including catastrophic insurance. The museum now bears these costs entirely. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges. By 2020, the museum was already struggling due to the island's economic downturn, compounded by hurricanes (2017), earthquakes (2020), and significant outmigration. Numerous adaptations were made to ensure the survival of the institution.

Assessments by the Museum's human resources division reveal that the most common reason for employees leaving MAPR between 2021 and 2023 was to seek better economic opportunities off-island, career growth, or for family reasons. As a result, MAPR's staff numbers have significantly declined since 2014, leading to an increased reliance on outsourced, contracted, and volunteer-based functions. Currently, the museum has 36 full-time staff members, seven part-time employees, over 60 volunteers, interns, and docents, along with an additional 35 outsourced workers.

The average salary for MAPR workers is around $30,000. About 71% of the museum's 43 employees have been with the institution for 10 years or less, and eight employees have joined in the last year. Our current regular employee level alone is 57% less than when the museum opened in 2000 with over 100 employees. The museum has not been fully staffed since FY2015, resulting in employees being overextended, even with support from the internal stakeholder community.

The restructuring that was made as a result from a reduced operating budget has led to overreliance on third-party contracted, temporary, volunteer, and part-time workers. These workers tend to experience higher turnover, which contributes to insufficient institutional knowledge and significant gaps in awareness of Museum and departmental procedures. Yet, many of these workers are the primary Museum representatives interacting with audiences. In response, operational strategies have been implemented by Human Resources, the Executive Director, and the Board to mitigate further fallout. These strategies align with best practices like those from the American Alliance of Museums to support worker satisfaction in the museum industry, where dissatisfaction is often higher than in other sectors.

By improving efficiency in the onboarding processes, MAPR will be able to dedicate more resources to its staff, stakeholders, educational programs, and innovative exhibitions. The goal is to standardize and enhance these processes to ensure consistent knowledge-sharing at an institutional level. Streamlining onboarding and leveraging technology will enable consistent training and knowledge dissemination for both new and current staff across all roles, from line workers to management.

Likewise, our most recent employee survey, conducted in October-November 2024, revealed that most staff members feel only somewhat knowledgeable about core institutional topics. Survey participants expressed a particular interest in expanding their onboarding experience to include training in Microsoft 365 and other job-related software, functional diversity, customer service, governance, human resources basics, employee benefits, art exhibitions, team building, collection management, finance processes, and the code of ethics. The survey also highlighted a strong desire for more professional development opportunities, peer-to-peer support, enhanced interdepartmental communication, and an online platform with accessible educational resources. The full results are attached as a supplemental document.

Moreover, the museum seeks to invest in activities that encourage peer-to-peer learning to cultivate a more integrated and collaborative institution. One such initiative, included in this proposal, is a new professional development activity: an annual professional retreat to kick off our fiscal year. This retreat will provide our extended team with an opportunity to reflect on our institutional mission, vision and

strategic goals; celebrate the museum's accomplishments, review key dates, and discuss upcoming initiatives; engage in brainstorming sessions to map out goals and ideas for the year; gain fresh insights through continuing education sessions with guest speakers; strengthen networking; foster a deeper understanding of each other's departments and roles; and explore current museum trends, including visitor experience, collection management, and other emerging practices in the museum field.

Enhancing the visitor experience while maximizing social impact is another important priority for the museum. Our commitment to this area of opportunity is demonstrated through our participation in three key initiatives: 1) **Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies (COVES)** – a museum industry collaborative initiative through which participating museums are gathering data to better understand visitors and continually refine their experience [MAPR participation underwritten by the Art Bridges Foundation]; 2) **Bloomberg Connects** – Arts and Cultural App developed by Bloomberg Philanthropies offering content and digital guides in 40 languages to over 600 + partner institutions, including the MAPR [participation and support provided by Bloomberg Philanthropies and Fundación Flamboyán] and 3) **Museum Social Impact in Practice (MSIIP)** – a three-year initiative of the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), funded by the IMLS, providing museum professionals with technical assistance in measuring their institutions' social impact [MAPR is among the forty museums participating in the MSIIP's inaugural cohort].

Primary Audience
The participants impacted by the proposed **Internal Stakeholder Development & Onboarding Program** are divided into three groups:

1) **Staff**:
   MAPR currently employs 36 full-time, 7 part-time employees, and 5 professional service contractors across key departments: Special Events, Curatorial, Education, Finance, Communications, Development, Human Resources, Conservation, Registrar, and the Creative Community Development Center.
2) **Other Internal Stakeholders**:
   MAPR outsources several critical front-of-house services (security, parking, gallery, and ticketing attendants) to local third-party providers. These workers, currently numbering 30, interact with visitors and shape their experience. As the first (and often only) point of contact, they will also participate in the onboarding process.
3) **Docents and Volunteers**:
   MAPR has 24 dedicated docents and 60-plus volunteers. Docents conduct guided tours and workshops, while volunteers assist in various departments. Like outsourced workers, docents and volunteers are often the only staff a visitor encounters, making their participation in the onboarding training is essential.

All participants will complete the same foundational modules, covering key topics such as the history of MAPR; the museum's strategic plan, goals, mission and vision; key departmental roles and responsibilities; DEIA values; MAPR's code of ethics; customer service; emergency plans and protocols; and our policies on domestic violence, workplace harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment, retaliation, as mandated by our local government. These policies will be complemented by in-person training.

Additionally, relevant staff and professional service contractors will receive specialized modules focused on internal processes. Museum docents and volunteers will complete additional modules centered on guided tours, creating engaging workshops, exploring MAPR's collection, and gallery exploration exercises. Completion of the onboarding modules is mandatory for all, including current staff. New

participants will undergo training before starting their roles and will dedicate one week to formal onboarding.

Beneficiaries
Our proposed Internal Stakeholder Development & Onboarding Program will have several internal and external beneficiaries. Internally, by realizing this project, MAPR will become more resilient and successful as an organization. We will have better-prepared employees who have a comprehensive awareness of the museum's daily operations, protocols, and history. Current and new employees will feel well equipped to more fully integrate themselves into their respective roles. Employees will feel more assured and confident at the start of their roles and as their careers advance within, and beyond, the MAPR.

Externally, the museum's broad public will benefit from a properly trained staff. Our nearly 92,000 yearly visitors will have a better visitor experience when staff and other internal stakeholders are better equipped to provide services to all segments of our public. Last year, we had 74,667 visitors to the Museum and about 16,500 visitors to our 2.5-acre Sculpture Garden. These visitors include those with functional diversity, seniors, children, students, tourists and more.

Project Work Plan

The project has two overlapping timelines:

The Onboarding Training has this timeline:

2024 Pre-Award Phase: This phase focused on defining the design and need for the new and enhanced Onboarding Training Curriculum. It incorporated feedback from current staff, department managers, and museum leadership to identify gaps in knowledge and accessibility within the existing onboarding modules.

Project Design and Scheduling Meetings: Each department manager provided input on essential topics for module development.

- In October and November of 2024, a survey was conducted among staff with 72% participation (or 31 employees). The survey consisted of three sections: 1) Rating their current onboarding experience, 2) Assessing their knowledge of key areas proposed in the Onboarding Training Curriculum, and 3) Gathering additional feedback on their educational interests, suggestions, and any general comments.

- The platform for delivering the Onboarding Training was selected through an existing vendor, ADP.

- Prospective module advisors were contacted, and the search for a production company began.

2025-2027 Post-Award Phase: This period will focus on recruitment, program meetings, module design, and production, content uploading to the ADP platform, and conducting a beta testing trial.

July 2025 - August 2025 (Program Kickoff and Recruitment): A kickoff meeting will be held with the Executive Director, Human Resources, and all department managers involved in the project to review guidelines and finalize the project timeline.

- The Project Coordinator will be recruited during this period.

- Production Company to be contracted by the end of August 2025.

- Project Task Force comprised of key managers, museum leadership and external resources (as needed) is formed.

September 2025 - March 2027 (Content Design and Production): A series of meetings will take place to write the scripts for the Onboarding Modules that require recording videos.

- The hired Production Company begins recording the videos for the modules for each department and will work with area managers to edit the content.

October 2027 - December 2027 (Beta Testing and Adjustments): The Project Task Force will evaluate the Onboarding Modules and the platform, providing feedback to the Production Company and Project Coordinator.

- The edited beta version will be distributed to an identified test group. This group will test the platform and the insights gathered will be assessed to make any necessary adjustments.

2028 Finalized Version: The revised version is distributed to new staff and a final report is made with program evaluations.

January 2028-June 2028 (Implementation and Evaluations): Test group feedback evaluated by Project Task Force and necessary external resources.

- The recommended adjustments are given to the Production Company so that they can make a finalized version of the content.

- The finalized Onboarding Training Modules are then distributed to new and existing staff.

The New Professional Development Yearly Retreat has this timeline:
The second half of our Fiscal Year, January to June each year, will be used for the following:

- Designating a specific location within the Museum for the retreat.

- Distributing a survey to Internal Stakeholders to gather their interest and topics.

- Inviting guest speakers aligned with the interests of internal stakeholders.

- Sending out "Save the Date" promotions to internal stakeholders.

- Purchasing materials required for mind-mapping exercises and/or workshops.

- Compiling relevant internal data to present as part of a report, including key accomplishments and ongoing initiatives.

The activity will be celebrated each year, starting the second year of this proposal, during the beginning of our Fiscal Year in August 2026. We will distribute an evaluation form for participants related to content, organization and additional feedback.

Risks to Project

MAPR acknowledges that the implementation of new technology entails an ongoing learning process. The beneficiaries involved, volunteers, staff, and professional service contractors, have different levels of knowledge on managing technology. We plan to make the Onboarding Modules as user-friendly as possible and will have training sessions to teach about this program. The Human Resource and IT contractors will also be open to requests or questions on this new technology. In addition, we will use a platform already in use by employees (ADP) to minimize any learning difficulties.

Project Management
The planning of this project involves several key museum stakeholders. MAPR's Executive Director (María C. Gaztambide, PhD) and departmental managers from Communications (Larissa Vázquez-Zapata), Development (Myrna Z. Pérez), Finance (Nancy Frattallone), Education (Nancy Seda de León), and Human Resources have designed the educational curriculum and have given their input on topics, formats, and length.

Wilmary Lebrón, Human Resources Manager, will have the most contact with staff, volunteers and contractors by providing them with the Onboarding Modules and responding to inquiries on the platform. She will also coordinate our new yearly retreat for professional development.

Larissa Vázquez will engage with the production company that will support the Onboarding Modules. In addition, a Project Coordinator will be hired to ensure that the timelines, deliverables and reporting deadlines are met on both the Onboarding Project and the yearly retreat for professional development.

Resources Needed
The funding sought in this application will allow MAPR to develop a robust Online Onboarding Module to train new and current staff, volunteers, and other internal stakeholders, as mentioned. The biggest cost of this program is associated with the Production of the Onboarding Modules, which includes designing, recording, and editing content for the modules, the payment of the license for the platform that will be used to upload the content and provide training, hiring a Project Coordinator and payment for Supporting advisors in topics related to functional diversity. MAPR will provide adequate space to take the Onboarding Modules, we have a Technological Room with computers, as well as a library, and conference rooms. In addition, current staff members use their computers at the museum to access these modules. We have also provided the time needed for the planning of this grant and the management of the proposal by key staff. Related to the professional development aspect of this initiative, it will require the payment of guest speakers. Additional details on costs for this grant are included in the Project's Budget and its narrative.

Progress Monitoring
MAPR's Internal Stakeholder Development & Onboarding Program will include continuous monitoring and evaluation throughout the proposal and after. The first phase of evaluation of this project is through the Beta Testing Period where select staff will have the opportunity to take the Onboarding Training and give their insights and recommendations on the platform, this will work as focus groups. The second phase is when the finalized version of the Onboarding Training is approved and distributed to new participants. Participation in the Onboarding Training is compulsory before starting any new role at MAPR. Participants will have concise Pre and Post Knowledge assessments. They could also give their feedback on topics like ease of use, pertinence of the content and recommendations. The participants will have certificates at the end of every module. A survey will be distributed to participants 6 months after taking the Onboarding Training to reflect on their performance at the Museum Post taking the Onboarding Training. Metrics like: Increased knowledge, Ease of use, and Improved performance at the Museum will be analyzed yearly.

Project Results

The final results for this program should reflect an increased knowledge in our workforce in volunteers as it pertains to MAPR, a better sense of belonging of participants and improved productivity. The measurement of these indicators will be evaluated constantly after every cohort finishes the modules.

MAPR staff and volunteers will:

- Engage with learning material that they can refer to during and after the Onboarding Training to strengthen their knowledge.
- Have access to a comprehensive onboarding and professional development process.
- All receive the same information. No matter when new staff are hired, they will have the flexibility to take the online modules vs. the alternative of waiting for in-person training. This ensures replicability which allows us to better measure results.
- Build a strong and integrated workforce with a sense of belonging and knowledge of the MAPR and its priorities.

Changing Knowledge, Skills, Behaviors and Attitudes
This initiative will prevent current and new staff from making mistakes due to a lack of general knowledge of overall operations early on. This improves overall efficiency as there is a smaller probability of error. By making this Onboarding Training compulsory for all staff and collaborators, we also promote sustainability in our operations. If for any reason any staff or collaborator is absent, a colleague can support at least the basics of the role temporarily as this program promotes cross departmental education. In addition, it will support our transition to a more technology-based education and integration of technology in operations.

Return of Federal Investment
Relating to our interest in retaining our current workforce, this program will give more confidence to current and new hires in their job expectations so that they can feel more assured in their roles. It will also provide an ongoing learning environment where we constantly exchange ideas and invest in staff's professional development. This results in a better equipped staff for our visitors.

Sustaining Our Progress
The topics that will be included in the Onboarding Modules are well thought out, align with our Institutional Strategic Plan and do not require periodical changes. However, the supporting written material will be modified as new protocol, laws, and changes occur. This allows MAPR to have up-to-date, relevant material for the Onboarding Program. The use of technology makes it more accessible and less labor-intensive to provide training to participants. In addition, the Human Resources Department will have more available insight as new staff are trained, to make improvements necessary.
Our yearly retreat for professional development is also sustainable as we will use mostly internal resources and continuously work on collaborations with other non-profits and government agencies.

Tangible products of the proposed Internal Stakeholder Development & Onboarding Program:

- 11 Videos to support the Onboarding Training Modules.
- Documentation of the project.
- Statistics provided by the ADP Platform to measure the efficiency of the Onboarding Modules.
- Statistics provided by the evaluation forms.

  A well-equipped staff with up-to-date knowledge of the museum's basics.

Schedule of Completition: Internal Stakeholder Development & Onboarding Program

2024 (Pre-Award)	October	November
Gathering Baseline Data from MAPR Staff + Research		
Weekly meetings by the Project Task Force for the development of this IMLS Grant		
A survey conducted among staff to gather baseline data for the Onboarding Training Development		
A platform for delivering the Onboarding Training (ADP) was chosen.		
A prospective production company was contacted		
Staff survey results to integrate feedback into IMLS proposal narrative were organized.		
Prospective module advisors were contacted		

Schedule of Completion: Internal Stakeholder Development & Onboarding Program

(Post Award) 2025-2026	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	June
Program Kickoff and Recruitment											
Form a Project Task Force comprised of key managers, museum leadership, and external resources.											
Contract Production Company											
Recruit Project Coordinator											
Content Design and Production											
Meetings between the production company, external resources, and MAPR managers to write the recording scripts.											
The production company starts recording the Onboarding Training Videos and edits them.											
Planning the Professional Development Internal Stakeholder Retreat											
Survey staff and management on topics they would like to be presented.											
Designate a specific location within the Museum for the retreat.											
Invite guest speakers aligned with the interests of internal stakeholders.											
Send out "Save the Date" promotions to internal stakeholders.											
Purchase materials required for mind-mapping exercises.											
Compile relevant internal data to present including key accomplishments and ongoing initiatives.											

Schedule of Completion: Internal Stakeholder Development & Onboarding Program

(Post Award) 2026-2027	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	June
Continuing Production											
The production company continues recording the Onboarding Training Videos and editing them with the support of area managers.											
Platform Development and Uploads											
The finalized content, including supporting documents and videos, will be uploaded to the chosen educational platform.											
First Edition of the Professional Development Internal Stakeholder Retreat											
Make final adjustments to the activity.											
The activity is evaluated by the Project Taskforce for future adjustments.											
Planning the Professional Development Internal Stakeholder Retreat											
Survey staff and management on topics they would like to be presented on.											
Designate a specific location within the Museum for the retreat.											
Invite guest speakers that align with the interests of internal stakeholders.											
Send out "Save the Date" promotions to internal stakeholders.											
Purchase materials required for mind-mapping exercises.											
Compile relevant internal data to present as part of a report, including key accomplishments and ongoing initiatives.											

Schedule of Completion: Internal Stakeholder Development & Onboarding Program

(Last Year) 2027-2028	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	June
Continuing Uploads											
Continue Uploads to the ADP Platform	■	■	■								
Beta Testing and adjustments											
Distribute the edited beta version to a selection of new and existing staff for testing				■	■	■					
Implementation and evaluations											
Evaluate the test group feedback and the finalized Onboarding Training Modules for distribution to new and existing staff.							■	■	■	■	■
Second Edition of the Professional Development Internal Stakeholder Retreat											
Make final adjustments to the activity.	■										
The Project Taskforce evaluates the activity and final reports are made.		■									