



Museum Grants for American Latino History and Culture

Sample Application ALHC-260665-OMS-26

Museum of Latin American Art

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$500,000

Amount of cost share: \$498,089

The Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) will advance collection scholarship through a rigorous scholarly research program that examines the narratives within the museum's permanent collection, through a close study of selected artworks, archival materials, acquisition histories, and cultural texts. Project activities include engaging up to six paid research fellows who will participate in a structured program of scholarly research, mentorship, and professional development. MOLAA will expand the fellowship program by incorporating independent curators and establishing a collaborative network of partner museums to advance research and knowledge sharing across institutions. The project will extend access to these resources through shared online platforms that connect collections and research across participating museums and will support the creation of a scholarly catalogue, a video series of recorded conversations with artists, and a public symposium synthesizing the three years of research by the fellows. Through paid research fellowships, institutional partnerships, and expanded digital access to collections, MOLAA will generate new scholarship, strengthen professional pathways into the museum field, and increase public engagement with American Latino art and cultural heritage.

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.

IMLS American Latino History and Culture (ALHC) Grant

MOLAA Research Center and Lab: Phase II

Narrative

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

IMLS Program and Agency-Level Goals and Objectives and the Proposed Project

The Museum of Latin American Art's (MOLAA) proposed project aligns with IMLS's American Latino History and Culture Initiative's **program goal and objective, Goal 2:** Support the growth and development of a professional workforce in American Latino Museums, **Objective 2.1:** Develop and implement internship, fellowship, and mentoring programs to support people entering the museum field. Secondly, the project also supports **program goal and objective, Goal 1:** Build the capacity of American Latino museums to serve their communities, **Objective 1.2:** Improve care and conservation of museum collections and archives and expand access to collections. MOLAA is also pleased to support IMLS's **agency-level goal and objective, Goal 1:** Champion Lifelong Learning, **Objective 1.2:** Support the training and professional development of the museum and library workforce. Secondly, the project also supports agency-level **Goal 3:** Advance Collections Stewardship and Access, **Objective 3.2:** Promote access to museum and library collections.

From September 2023 through August 2026, MOLAA developed and created a Latino Museum Research & Fellowship Consortium (LMRFC) which provided a pipeline of opportunities and fellowships for postgraduate and doctoral students in curatorial, research and museum practices, partnerships with universities, and led to the creation of the MOLAA Research Center and Lab (Center) and digitization of MOLAA's Permanent Collection. As a continuation of this successful initiative, the **MOLAA Research Center and Lab: Phase II** offers a second phase of the Center consisting of a *rigorous academic research and public programming initiative* centered around critical engagement with the collection and institutional narratives.

The project aligns with the mentioned IMLS goals in that it will foster fellowship opportunities for graduate and postgraduate students as well as independent through paid research fellowships, mentorship, and professional development, offering an opportunity to learn valuable skills in curatorial and research, and strengthen the museum workforce. Additionally, it allows for expanded access to museum collections through a partnership of **four AAM-accredited museums**.

Proposed Project

The proposed **MOLAA Research Center and Lab: Phase II**, is a three-year initiative that expands and deepens the work begun in the first phase of the MOLAA Research Center and Lab and the Latino Museum Research & Fellowship Consortium (LMRFD). Building on the successful model developed between 2023-2026, **Phase II** will **advance collection scholarship** through a rigorous scholarly research program that examines the narratives within MOLAA's Permanent Collection, through a close study of selected artworks, archival materials, acquisition histories, and cultural texts.

Phase II will expand the fellowship program by incorporating independent curators and establishing a collaborative network of partner museums to advance research and knowledge sharing across institutions. Building on the digitization of MOLAA's Permanent Collection completed during Phase I, the project will extend access to these resources through shared online platforms that connect collections and research across participating museums. Project Fellows will conduct original research and contribute to the field through scholarly publications, public presentations, panel discussions, and artist and curator conversations developed and led by the Fellows themselves. Through paid research fellowships, institutional partnerships, and expanded digital access to collections, Phase II will generate new scholarship, strengthen professional pathways into the museum field, and increase public engagement with American Latino art and cultural heritage.

Through sustained scholarly inquiry, the project will examine how modern and contemporary art histories have been constructed, displayed, and interpreted within one of the most influential museum collections in the United States – the Museum of Latin American Art’s (MOLAA) Permanent Collection. Rather than approaching the collection as a fixed canon, the project understands it as a dynamic historiographic site, one that can be expanded, reconsidered, and recontextualized through research, dialogue, and pedagogical exchange.

The **research component** will involve close analysis of selected works, archival materials, curatorial texts and essays, and acquisition histories within MOLAA’s Permanent Collection, with particular attention to how narratives of experimentation, abstraction, conceptual practice, and global modernisms have been framed institutionally. The goal is to generate new interpretive frameworks that situate these works within broader transnational, interdisciplinary, and methodological conversations in contemporary art history.

A core pillar of the initiative is the creation of **paid research fellowships** for graduate students and independent curators. The fellowships will be provided financial support, mentorship, and structured access to scholarly dialogue, ensuring that emerging voices can meaningfully contribute to critical discourse around museum collections and curatorial practice. Fellows will participate in research seminars, collaborative workshops, and public presentations, producing critique essays, research papers, or curatorial proposals that respond directly to the collection and apply in different magazines to open an international conversation about the collection internationally.

At the same time, MOLAA will create a **network with four AAM-accredited museums** to share information and material of the selected artists and artworks to incorporate on an online platform between the institutions.

The project will culminate in a **series of public presentations, panel discussions, moderated conversations, and a series of publications** that activate the research findings within an open intellectual forum on site and virtually. These events will foster dialogue between scholars, curators, artists, and the broader public, positioning the museum not only as a repository of objects but as a site of ongoing knowledge production.

By integrating academic research, public discourse, and fellowship support, this initiative advances innovative scholarship while investing in the next generation of art historians and curators. It contributes to the field by modeling how institutional collections can be critically engaged through collaborative research structures that prioritize access, interpretation, and sustained intellectual exchange.

The project will achieve several key outcomes that will advance the knowledge of American Latino artistic practices and strengthen MOLAA’s research capacities, the project will:

- **Strengthen the museum workforce through paid Fellowships:** The project will provide paid fellowships, mentorship and research experience, enabling them to build their readiness for curatorial and museum leadership roles.
- **Deepen scholarly research on American Latino Art:** The project will support in-house research that examines key currents shaping American Latino artistic practices and their place within the broader historical narratives.
- **Leverage MOLAA’s Research Center and Lab’s resources:** The research will be guided by the MOLAA Research Center and Lab, which will provide dedicated access to institutional archives, collection records, and research tools.
- **Strengthen intellectual collaboration within the museum:** The project will foster sustained, active dialogue and intellectual exchange within MOLAA’s Curatorial and Collections team, enriching interpretation, contextual analysis, and internal research methodologies.
- **Enhance documentation and bibliographic resources:** Develop partnerships with other accredited museums to collaborate with a Museum Digital Lab along with the documentation of MOLAA’s Collection to strengthen bibliographic resources and strengthen digital and physical documentation related to American Latino art, improving long-term access for researchers and the public.

Project Needs

Building on the findings and lessons of the first phase of the MOLAA Research Center and Lab, Phase II responds to a clear need for sustained scholarly research, fellowship pipelines, and expanding academic and public access to MOLAA’s

Permanent Collection. National research consistently identifies gaps in both American Latino representation in the museum workforce and in the scholarly interpretation of Latin American and American Latino art. In Los Angeles County, a 2023 SMU DataArts study reported that Latinos make up only 13% of the arts and culture workforce, despite making up nearly 50% of the Los Angeles population.

MOLAA's 2023-2026 LMRFC project funded by IMLS demonstrated a high demand for opportunities MOLAA created. Postgraduate students expressed a need for sustained pathways in curatorial research, professional development and mentorship grounded in Latin American and American Latino art histories.

The first phase of the project addressed a clear need for expanded scholarly interpretation of MOLAA's Permanent Collection. As the only accredited museum dedicated to Latin American and American Latino modern and contemporary art in the U.S., MOLAA has a responsibility to advance scholarly research and curatorial narratives and provide pipeline opportunities.

The project also responds to the need for greater inter-institutional collaboration and shared digital access to American Latino art across museums. Partnering with other AAM-accredited museums will strengthen research resources and broaden accessibility to the Collection.

Target Group and Beneficiaries

The primary target group for the project includes **graduate and postgraduate students** and **independent curators** who will benefit from the paid fellowships, mentorship, and opportunities for professional development. The fellows will gain professional experience in curatorial research, archival analysis, and interpretive practice supporting their entry into museum leadership pipelines.

Longer-term beneficiaries include **scholars and researchers** who will gain access to new research, publications, and archives generated through the project, **partner museums and their audiences** who will benefit from shared platforms, research exchange, and enhanced visibility of American Latino artists, and **students, educators and the general public** who will deepen their understanding of Latin American and American Latino art histories.

By cultivating future curators, generating new research, and expanding documentation of the Permanent Collection, the project strengthens both the museum field and public understanding of American Latino art.

PROJECT WORK PLAN

The Project Period & Project Program Design

Phase II will establish an advisory committee and engage **four to six paid research Fellows**, including graduate students, early-career scholars, and independent curators, who will participate in a structured program of scholarly research, mentorship, and professional development.

The project period will take place **from September 1, 2026 through August 31, 2029**, and will be implemented in three phases:

Year 1: Research Framework and Foundation Building

September 2026 – August 2027

Establish the advisory committee, recruit Fellows, and develop the research framework for examining selected works and narratives within MOLAA's Permanent Collection.

Year 2: Advanced Research, Writing, and Public Programming

September 2027 – August 2028

Fellows conduct in-depth research, develop scholarly writing, and participate in public programs including lectures, panels, and conversations. Work on publication development will also take place during this period.

Year 3: Dissemination, Publication, and Institutional Impact

September 2028 – August 2029

Research findings will be disseminated through publications, public programs, and digital platforms, strengthening institutional capacity and contributing new scholarship to the field of American Latino art.

The project period and tasks are in the **Schedule of Completion**.

Year 1 Activities:

In **Year 1**, initial project planning, establishing the advisory committee, coordination with other institutions, and the launching of the fellowship program will take place.

- **Project Design and Planning:** Advisory committee will be established, consisting of scholars, curators, and independent researchers. MOLAA will define thematic research clusters related to MOLAA's Collection (e.g., abstraction, conceptualism, transnational modernisms, experimental media); and will coordinate research access to collection materials, archives, and curatorial documentation.
- **Institutional Coordination:** Selection and coordination will begin to take place between MOLAA and potential partner museums.
- **Fellowship Program Launch:** MOLAA will begin the development of the new fellowship structure (based on what it learned from the first phase of the project), will determine eligibility and research expectations. MOLAA will conduct an open national call for applications targeting graduate and postgraduate students and independent curators, and MOLAA will select four paid Fellows.
- MOLAA will also formalize monthly research seminars and methodology workshops, object-based archival research, analysis of acquisition histories and exhibition narratives, organization of internal colloquia where fellows will present their preliminary findings and begin the documentation and recording of research discussions.

Year 2 Activities:

- **Fellowships** begin and fellows will engage in advanced scholarly research and draft scholarly publication materials (such as essays, collection studies, curatorial case studies, etc.); will engage in Professional Development activities, and will document findings, make presentations, and recording of research discussions.
- **Advanced Research & Writing:** Fellows will produce draft research essays or curatorial case studies, convene peer-review workshops, and we will invite guest scholars for critical response sessions.
- **Shared digital collection access:** Participating museums will contribute selected digitized artworks, archival materials, and collection records to a shared online platform, enabling scholars, educators, and the public to explore American Latino art across multiple institutional collections in a centralized digital environment. MOLAA will contribute 180 objects to the shared collection digitization (approximately 60 per year).
- **Collaborative research and public programming:** Partner institutions will co-develop scholarly exchanges, public panels, and research presentations that highlight cross-collection narratives, generating new scholarship and expanding public engagement with American Latino art and cultural history.
- **Public Programming Series:** In collaboration with MOLAA and the Fellows, we will organize **three to four** public panels or lectures engaging MOLAA's Collection from new historiographic perspectives, present thematic conversations linking research findings to broader art-historical debates, and record and archive all public programs on MOLAA's website.

- **Publication Development:** In close collaboration with the Chief Curator and Registrar, the Fellows will begin the editorial process for a scholarly publication (print or digital), commission additional short essays (if needed), and design a publication framework – creating a MOLAA Catalog series around its Collection. Fellows will produce draft essays; public lecture series and digital archive of recorded programs will be conducted.

Year 3 Activities:

- **Year 3 Fellowships** begin and fellows will engage in advanced scholarly research and draft scholarly publication materials (such as essays, collection studies, curatorial case studies, etc.); will engage in Professional Development activities, and will document findings, make presentations, and recording of research discussions.
- **Institutional Coordination** and activities with the partner museums continues.
- **Public Programming Series** continues with public panels or lectures.
- **Publication & Editorial Finalization:** Final editing and peer review of the publication, design, production and distribution of the publication; a digital publication will be hosted on partner institutional platforms.
- **Capstone Symposium:** A culminating public symposium synthesizing the three years of research will be organized and take place and will include national and international scholars as attendees, the Fellows' final research projects and MOLAA's Catalog series will be presented.
- **Evaluation & Future Integration:** MOLAA will assess the impact of the Fellowship model, develop recommendations for ongoing research engagement with museum collections, explore sustainability (for future fellowship cycles and expanded partnerships), and assess the published scholarly volume, capstone symposium, the public archive of recorded lectures and interviews, developing into a final evaluation of the project and institutional report.

Project Leadership and Personnel

Chief Curator, Gabriela Urtiaga, will lead and serve as the main point of contact for the project, partners, and provide overall supervision and guidance for the project personnel. Gabriela successfully planned and led the implementation of the MOLAA Research Center and Lab and the LMRFC. She has developed exhibition and artistic projects in collaboration with national and international institutions, such as CCK, Recoleta Cultural Center and MALBA in Argentina, and Foundation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, La Maison Rouge, the Museum of the National Library (France), the Centro Centro Madrid (Spain), the MACRO Museum Rome (Italy) and the Gabriela Mistral Center (Chile), among others and has worked with Latin American and International renowned artists throughout her professional career.

Other project personnel include:

Registrar, Hilary Morimoto, has more than eleven years' curatorial experience and began her role at MOLAA in 2025. Hilary will assist the Chief Curator with the project, will train and manage the Fellows

Gallery Technician, Julia Bielenberg, will assist the Registrar, Chief Curator, and Fellows in handling and transporting artworks throughout the gallery space, installation, hanging, and other tasks.

Deputy Director, Solimar Salas, will lead the purchase and implementation of fellows' hardware and software needs, and will assist in the marketing and communications content of the programming. Solimar has extensive museum experience working on more than 100 exhibitions in different aspects, including bilingual content development, interpretive programming, education technology programming, and web content management.

VP of Finance and Operations, Cedric Woolfork, will manage financial oversight for the project.

Grants Manager, Michelle Woods, will oversee the grant administration of the project.

Project Partners

MOLAA will engage four **AAM-accredited museums** as project partners to support research and information exchange of the selected artists and artworks to incorporate on an online platform between the institutions. While final partners are still being confirmed, MOLAA has established clear selection criteria focused on mission alignment, collections of relevance and capacity for collaboration. Partnerships will be formalized through MOUs outlining responsibilities, deliverables, and data-sharing agreements to ensure consistency and accountability across institutions.

An advisory committee of contributors will foster a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach throughout the project.

Tracking Progress to Achieve Intended Results

To ensure all activities are completed within the project timeframe and achieve the intended results, MOLAA will monitor progress through **weekly Fellow check-ins, monthly internal project meetings, and quarterly Advisory Committee meetings**. These meetings will assess the status of the project timeline, research activities, and related programming to ensure steady progress and coordination across project partners.

Key performance metrics will include the **number of research outputs** (such as Fellow-authored essays, collection studies, peer-reviewed or editorially reviewed publications, and recorded research conversations); **Fellow participation in seminars, workshops, and public presentations**; the **number of collection records documented and expanded**; and the **number of public programs, bilingual educational materials, and digital videos produced**.

MOLAA staff will conduct **mid-year and annual internal reviews** to evaluate project progress against established milestones, identify emerging needs, and adjust timelines or resources as necessary to ensure successful completion of project goals. Additional evaluation methods and performance indicators are outlined in the **Performance Measurement Plan**.

Potential Project Risks and Risk Mitigation

MOLAA recognizes that a multi-year research and fellowship initiative involving multiple institutions, digital coordination, and academic collaboration may encounter challenges. To ensure the project stays on track, MOLAA has clear and practical steps to mitigate risks.

In the first phase of the project (2023-2026), MOLAA experienced delays in initiating the Consortium of institutions of higher-learning and fellowships because each institution had different internal processes and approval timeline. A similar issue may arise when formalizing partnerships with museums, which may slow down the shared work or delay scheduling. To mitigate, MOLAA has built extra time in the project timeline to accommodate these delays and will keep a backup list of potential museum partners in case any initial partners cannot proceed. MOLAA will continue all internal project activities while agreements are still being finalized, so progress continues.

There is a possibility that Fellow recruitment could take longer than expected or not align with academic calendars. To mitigate, MOLAA will launch an early, national call, giving applicants plenty of time to apply and for the recruitment process. Fellowship expectations, schedules, and benefits will be communicated early. MOLAA will offer competitive stipends (\$40,000 for 10 months) to attract strong candidates.

MOLAA acknowledges that changes in key personnel could affect the project activities. To mitigate, MOLAA will cross-train staff on core tasks ensuring multiple team members can step in and handle essential tasks. Short-term contractors or temporary support staff may be hired if additional capacity is needed.

When sharing information with other institutions, such as artwork details, research materials, or metadata, there may be differences in how museums organize or format their digital records. This can cause compatibility issues between systems. MOLAA will work with partners to create simple, shared standards so that all systems are compatible. MOLAA will conduct a small-scale test with one partner to identify and fix issues early.

To balance the many components of a multi-year coordination and project, MOLAA will conduct monthly meetings with the project team, and conduct quarterly grant check-ins to address delays, adjust timelines, and ensure the project remains on track.

PROJECT RESULTS

The MOLAA Research Center and lab: Phase II will produce clear, measurable results that strengthen scholarly understanding of Latin American and American Latino art and broaden access to MOLAA's Permanent Collection. Through focused research, collaboration with partner museums, and the work of four paid fellows, the project will **advance knowledge** on key artworks, acquisition histories and institutional narratives. The research will culminate in a scholarly publication, a digital archive of recorded programs, and a symposium, making new knowledge widely accessible to scholars, students, and the public

The project will advance the study of American Latino art by enabling sustained in-house research supported by the MOLAA Research Center and Lab's archives, tools, and institutional expertise, as the only accredited museum in the U.S. dedicated to Latin American and Latino modern and contemporary art.

The Fellows will develop advanced skills in art historical research, curatorial writing, objective analysis, archival analysis, acquisition history evaluation. Through their participation in seminars, workshops, and hands-on engagement with the Permanent Collection, the Fellows will build strong professional portfolios of peer-reviewed, or public disseminated work, gain professional networks, and gain mentorship that supports their readiness for **museum leadership roles and careers**.

The project will also enhance the documentation and interpretation of MOLAA's Permanent Collection, improve research resources, and expand academic and public access to MOLAA's Permanent Collection with four partner museums. These enhanced collections access will strengthen **long-term stewardship** of the Permanent Collection and enable future scholarly and curatorial initiatives.

The **resulting project outputs** from the project include a scholarly catalogue (print and digital), a video series of recorded conversations with artists, a symposium, and research essays, curatorial analyses, and acquisition studies by the Fellows. MOLAA will integrate the fellowship model, research frameworks, and digital tools as an ongoing institutional practice. The publications, documentation, and museum partnerships established by the project will ensure **sustained impact** in the field and continued public benefit after the grant period ends.

SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

MOLAA Research Center and Lab: Phase II

YEAR 1: Research Framework & Foundation

Project Component	Project Task	YEAR 1: SEPTEMBER 2026 - AUGUST 2027											
		SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Planning & Management	MOLAA will conduct an internal kickoff meeting with Curatorial staff, conducted by the Chief Curator to review goals and assess the needs of the project in the first quarter.												
	MOLAA internal project team will meet monthly to conduct monthly assessments of the project.												
	Advisory Committee will be established; initial committee meeting will be held and hold quarterly meetings.												
Implementation	The Chief Curator, along with Advisory input, will establish thematic research clusters and coordinate research access to collection materials, archives, and curatorial documentation.												
	Outreach to accredited-Museum potential partners begins; and partnership materials are drafted, led by the Chief Curator and supported by project staff.												
	Fellowship scope is defined, and national call is published, led by the Chief Curator and supported by the Deputy Director.												
	Confirm Museum partners and execute MOUs, led by the Chief Curator and supported by project staff.												
	The Chief Curator will lead the fellowship application review, and two Year 2 Fellows will be confirmed.												
Evaluation & Follow-Up	Grant monitoring and quarterly check-ins conducted by Chief Curator, Grants Manager, and VP of Finance & Operations.												

SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

MOLAA Research Center and Lab: Phase II

YEAR 2: Advanced Research & Writing, Public Programming, Publication Development

Project Component	Project Task	YEAR 2: SEPTEMBER 2027 - AUGUST 2028											
		SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Planning & Management	MOLAA internal project team will meet monthly to conduct monthly assessments of the project.												
	Quarterly Advisory Committee meetings are held.												
Implementation	Year 2 Fellowships begin for two Fellows; Year 2 Fellowship Period.												
	Editing, design, translation, and proof cycle for publication, led by the editorial team and designers, supported by the Chief Curator.												
	Public programming calendar is finalized; guest scholars will be invited for peer-response sessions, led by the Chief curator and supported by the Advisory Committee.												
	Confirm editorial scope for scholarly publication (print/digital), led by the Chief Curator and supported by the Advisory Committee.												
	Year 2 Fellows, supported by the Chief Curator and Registrar conduct advanced research and draft scholarly publication materials (i.e.: essays, collection studies, curatorial case studies, etc.).												
	Institutional coordination begins between museum partners, including meetings and shared data activities.												
	Seminars, workshops, and archival research, take place led by the Chief Curator, and supported by the Advisory Committee and Fellows. Fellows will present their preliminary findings and begin the documentation and recording of research discussions.												
	National call is published for Year 3 Fellows, led by the Chief Curator and supported by the Deputy Director.												
Evaluation & Follow-Up	Grant monitoring and quarterly check-ins conducted by VP of Learning and Interpretive Programs, Grants Manager, and VP of Finance & Operations.												

SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

MOLAA Research Center and Lab: Phase II

YEAR 3: Publication, Symposium and Institutional Integration

Project Component	Project Task	YEAR 3: SEPTEMBER 2028 - AUGUST 2029											
		SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Planning & Management	MOLAA internal project team will meet monthly to conduct monthly assessments of the project.												
	Quarterly Advisory Committee meetings are held.												
Implementation	Year 3 Fellowships begin for two Fellows; Year 3 Fellowship period.												
	Institutional coordination continues between museum partners; final shared platform updates conducted with partner museums and MOLAA.												
	Year 3 Fellows, supported by the Chief Curator and Registrar, conduct advanced research and drafts for scholarly publication materials (i.e.: essays, collection studies, curatorial case studies, etc.)												
	Editing, design, translation, and proof cycle for publication, led by the editorial team and designers, supported by the Chief Curator.												
	Publication printing/production; digital publication packaging is complete, led by the editorial team and designers, supported by the Chief Curator.												
	Deliver capstone symposium event (hybrid event with recordings and captioning); collection of attendance and survey data.												
Evaluation & Follow-Up	Grant monitoring and quarterly check-ins conducted by Chief Curator, Grants Manager, and VP of Finance & Operations.												
	Final project evaluation and impact report; completion of sustainability and institutional plan; final grant report.												