



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-259431-OMS-26

Project Category: Lifelong Learning

Project Type: Small Project (\$5,000-\$25,000)

Red Cloud Indian Art, Čhatkú Arts Center

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$25,000
Amount of cost share:	\$67,600

The Čhatkú Arts Center will implement cultural landscaping and interpretive initiatives to enhance campus storytelling and broaden cultural tourism. Activities will focus on developing self-guided tour experiences accessible when the museum is closed or after hours. Funds will support designing and installing culturally informed landscape elements, interpretive signage, and storytelling features highlighting Lakota history, art, and community ties to place. These improvements will enable visitors to engage more deeply with the museum's cultural significance and allow for independent exploration. By adapting campus tours, the project will strengthen cultural tourism programming, improve access to Indigenous narratives, create meaningful opportunities for visitors to learn about the Oglala Lakota through place-based storytelling, and support economic and professional opportunities for Native artists.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Digital Products Plan
- Performance Measurement Plan

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.

Narrative

Project Justification

This project aligns with the goal of Building the capacity of small museums to provide museum services to their community; Objective 1: Lifelong Learning, which supports museums in expanding educational opportunities and increasing access to knowledge and cultural understanding. The project will strengthen the Čhatkú Arts Center's ability to provide meaningful educational and cultural experiences that deepen public engagement with contemporary Indigenous art, Lakota cultural knowledge, and intergenerational learning.

The project directly advances the Čhatkú Arts Center's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, which outlines priorities in cultural stewardship, Indigenous artist advancement, youth education, community engagement, and institutional sustainability. By enhancing exhibition interpretation, developing innovative visitor experiences, and expanding access to Indigenous artistic expression, the project supports the Center's goals of strengthening collections leadership, increasing opportunities for Indigenous artists, and deepening community-based cultural programming. The project will also support youth education and workforce development by providing new learning opportunities for students and emerging artists, while reinforcing the Center's role as a cultural resource for the Oglala Lakota community. In doing so, it helps position the Arts Center as a trusted hub for cultural knowledge, creativity, and dialogue.

The need for this project stems from several challenges identified through staff planning sessions, community feedback, and institutional assessment during development of the 2026–2029 strategic plan. The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is geographically large and rural, with limited access to arts education, cultural institutions, and professional opportunities in the arts. At the same time, the Čhatkú Arts Center holds an important and growing collection of contemporary Indigenous art and hosts significant programs such as the Red Cloud Indian Art Show. Community members, artists, and educators have expressed the need for more accessible interpretation of exhibitions, expanded educational resources, and new ways for visitors to engage with Lakota cultural knowledge and contemporary Indigenous art. The project responds to these needs by strengthening interpretive storytelling, improving access to exhibitions and collections, and creating opportunities for visitors to explore Indigenous perspectives through self-guided learning experiences.

The primary audience for this project includes residents of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, particularly Lakota artists, youth and students, and local families who regularly participate in the Arts Center's exhibitions, workshops, and programs. The reservation spans approximately 3,468 square miles and is home to an estimated 20,000–25,000 residents, the majority of whom are members of the Oglala Lakota and citizens of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Annually, the Center directly engages several thousand individuals throughout the world through exhibitions, school visits, artist programs, and community events. Members of these audiences have been involved in the planning process through community conversations, artist engagement, and feedback gathered during strategic planning and program development. Their input emphasized the importance of creating learning opportunities that reflect Lakota values, encourage youth participation in the arts, and elevate contemporary Indigenous voices.

The ultimate beneficiaries of the project include not only the immediate participants but also future generations of artists, students, researchers, and community members who will benefit from strengthened museum capacity and expanded cultural programming. By enhancing interpretive resources, educational access, and engagement with Indigenous art and culture, the project contributes to long-term cultural preservation, economic opportunity for Indigenous artists, and increased public understanding of contemporary Indigenous artistic expression. Over time, these efforts will grow a broader audience, including regional, national, and international visitors, while ensuring that the Arts Center continues to serve as a vibrant cultural space that sustains Lakota knowledge, creativity, and community connection.

Project Work Plan

Over a twelve-month period, the Čhatkú Arts Center will implement a series of coordinated activities to develop culturally informed landscape interpretation and self-guided visitor experiences across its campus. The project will unfold in four phases.

Phase 1: Planning and Community Consultation (Months 1–3).

The project team will convene planning sessions with staff, Lakota artists, cultural advisors, and educators to refine interpretive themes and identify key locations across the campus for storytelling features. During this phase, the Center will also review cultural protocols to ensure that interpretive content reflects Lakota perspectives and respects community knowledge. Site assessments will guide the design of landscape features and signage that integrate art, history, and place-based storytelling.

Phase 2: Design and Content Development (Months 3–6).

The Center will work with designers and Indigenous artists to develop interpretive signage, landscape elements, and storytelling components for the self-guided tour experience. Content will highlight Lakota history, contemporary Indigenous art, and the relationship between community, culture, and land. The team will also develop accessible visitor materials that allow guests to explore the campus independently, including after museum hours.

Phase 3: Fabrication and Installation (Months 6–10).

Landscape features and interpretive signage will be fabricated and installed across the campus. These elements will create a cohesive self-guided tour route connecting the Arts Center, surrounding grounds, and key cultural points of interest. The installation process will prioritize durability, accessibility, and visual integration with the landscape.

Phase 4: Launch and Evaluation (Months 10–12).

The final phase will include public launch of the self-guided campus tour, community preview events, and promotion through regional cultural tourism networks. The Center will gather visitor feedback and assess early outcomes to inform future programming and improvements.

Several risks may affect the project. Because Pine Ridge is a rural location, supply delays or installation challenges may arise. To mitigate these risks, the project timeline includes buffer periods and will prioritize working with regional vendors when possible. Weather conditions may also affect installation of outdoor features; therefore, fabrication will begin early to allow

flexible scheduling. Cultural interpretation also requires careful review to ensure accuracy and respect for Lakota traditions; this will be addressed through consultation with cultural advisors and community members throughout the planning process.

The project will be planned, implemented, and managed by the Čhatkú Arts Center leadership and staff. The Arts Center Director will oversee the project and ensure alignment with institutional goals. The Curator and exhibitions staff will guide interpretive content and coordinate artist involvement. Facilities staff will assist with site preparation and installation logistics. Lakota artists, cultural advisors, and designers will contribute to the development of interpretive elements and storytelling features.

To carry out these activities, the project will require financial resources for design services, fabrication and installation of signage and landscape elements, artist honoraria, and visitor interpretation materials. Personnel resources will include staff time for planning, coordination, and community engagement. Additional institutional resources include the Center's campus grounds, existing exhibitions and collections that inform interpretive content, and partnerships with artists and educators across Oglala Lakota County.

The Čhatkú Arts Center will track progress and evaluate outcomes through a combination of project management benchmarks and visitor engagement measures. Staff will monitor the completion of each project phase against the timeline and document installation milestones. Visitor engagement will be assessed through attendance tracking, informal visitor feedback, and surveys measuring how effectively the self-guided tour increases understanding of Lakota culture and contemporary Indigenous art. The Center will also document participation from artists and community partners involved in the project. These evaluation methods will help the Center measure success in expanding cultural access, strengthening campus storytelling, and enhancing cultural tourism opportunities on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Project Results

The intended results of this project are to increase access to Lakota cultural knowledge, enhance visitor engagement with contemporary Indigenous art, and strengthen the Čhatkú Arts Center's capacity to provide meaningful cultural and educational experiences for the Pine Ridge community and visitors. By developing culturally informed landscape interpretation and a self-guided campus tour, the project will address the challenge of limited access to museum experiences outside of standard operating hours and the broader need for expanded arts and cultural resources in this rural and economically underserved region. The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation spans a large geographic area and has limited cultural infrastructure, making the Arts Center an essential hub for arts education, community engagement, and cultural preservation. Creating a self-guided, place-based storytelling experience will allow community members and visitors to engage with Lakota art, history, and culture at any time, strengthening the Center's role as a year-round cultural resource.

As a result of this project, the primary audience, Lakota artists, youth and students, local families, and other community members across the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and beyond, will experience increased opportunities to learn about contemporary Indigenous art and Lakota

cultural heritage. Visitors will gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between Lakota culture, land, and artistic expression through interpretive storytelling integrated throughout the campus landscape. Youth and students who participate in visits or educational activities will develop a stronger awareness of Indigenous artistic traditions and contemporary creative pathways. Community members and visitors will also experience greater confidence and curiosity in exploring the Arts Center independently, fostering positive attitudes toward cultural learning and encouraging ongoing engagement with museum programming.

Several tangible products will result from this project. These include a self-guided campus tour featuring interpretive signage, culturally informed landscape elements, and storytelling features that highlight Lakota history, contemporary Indigenous art, and the relationship between the Arts Center and the surrounding community. These interpretive installations will create a cohesive visitor pathway across the campus that remains accessible even when the museum building is closed. Supporting materials, such as printed or digital guides, will help visitors navigate the tour and engage with the stories presented at each location. Because these elements will be installed outdoors across the campus grounds, they will be accessible to community members, school groups, and cultural tourists throughout the year. By expanding interpretive resources beyond the interior gallery spaces, the project ensures that cultural knowledge and artistic interpretation remain widely available to both local residents and visitors traveling through the region.

The benefits of the project will extend well beyond the grant period. The interpretive landscape features and signage will serve as long-term educational resources that can be integrated into school visits, artist programming, and cultural tourism initiatives. The self-guided tour will become a permanent part of the Arts Center's visitor experience, allowing the institution to continue offering accessible cultural engagement without requiring additional staffing for every visit. In addition, the interpretive framework developed through this project will support future exhibition interpretation, community storytelling initiatives, and artist collaborations. The Center will maintain and update the interpretive elements as needed, ensuring that they remain accurate, culturally respectful, and engaging for future audiences.

By investing in interpretive infrastructure and place-based storytelling, this project will create lasting improvements in how the Čhatkú Arts Center serves its community. The project will strengthen the Center's ability to share Lakota perspectives, support Indigenous artists, and provide meaningful cultural learning opportunities for generations to come. These long-term outcomes will help ensure that the Arts Center continues to function as a vibrant cultural hub on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation while expanding opportunities for education, cultural preservation, and community connection.



Project Overview

As part of the self-guided campus tour project, the Čhatkú Arts Center will create digital products to expand access to Lakota cultural knowledge and contemporary Indigenous art while complementing onsite interpretive signage and landscape features. These digital products will support experiential learning, visitor engagement, and long-term educational access for onsite and remote audiences. The digital content will be carefully designed using industry standards to ensure availability, accessibility, and sustainability while respecting Lakota cultural protocols.

Types of Digital Products

1. Interactive Digital Tour Guide

- **Description:** A mobile-friendly interactive guide with multimedia content, including text descriptions, images, audio narratives by Indigenous artists, and short videos explaining cultural significance.
- **Quantity:** One comprehensive guide covering 15–20 interpretive stations.
- **Formats:** web accessibility, MP4 for videos, JPEG/PNG for images, MP3 for audio files.
- **Metadata:** Each station will include structured data describing the artist, artwork, cultural context, date created, and source.
- **Standards:** Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and International Image Interoperability Framework for high-resolution images.

2. Downloadable Visitor Guides and Educational PDFs

- **Description:** Printable PDFs including campus maps, interpretive text, artwork information, and suggested learning activities.
- **Quantity:** One comprehensive guide; updates will be made annually.
- **Formats:** PDF/A for long-term preservation.
- **Metadata:** Embedded descriptive metadata, including authorship, date, rights, and version history.
- **Standards:** PDF archival compliance.

3. Digital Archival Content

- **Description:** High-quality images and metadata for selected artworks and interpretive elements.
- **Quantity:** Approximately 200–300 objects, including historical and contemporary works.
- **Formats:** TIFF for master images, JPEG for web delivery; XML for metadata.
- **Metadata:** Structured using local cultural descriptors.
- **Standards:** Controlled vocabulary for cultural terms.

4. Social Media and Multimedia Outreach

- **Description:** Short-form videos, images, and stories highlighting the project launch and artist narratives.
- **Quantity:** 12–15 posts per year across platforms.
- **Formats:** MP4 videos, JPEG/PNG images.
- **Metadata:** Date, platform, artist attribution, and description; adheres to platform metadata standards.

Availability

All digital products will be publicly available through the Čatkú Arts Center website and related platforms:

- **Interactive Digital Tour Guide:** Accessible via standard web browsers on desktops, tablets, and smartphones; QR codes will link to each tour station. No special software is required.
- **Downloadable PDFs:** Freely available online and printable; guides can also be emailed to requesters.
- **Digital Archival Content:** Hosted in the Center's collection management system openly searchable for non-sensitive content; restricted items will follow cultural access protocols.
- **Social Media Content:** Published on Instagram, Facebook, and the Center's website, with cross-posting to partner networks to maximize reach.

Access

Access strategies ensure equitable, inclusive, and culturally respectful use:

- **Accessibility:** Alt text for images, captions for audio/video, high-contrast visuals.
- **Cultural Protocols:** Sensitive content and Lakota cultural knowledge will have tiered access, available to researchers, educators, or community members with approval.
- **Licensing:** Digital products will be shared under where appropriate; cultural materials may include RightsStatements.org annotations to specify restrictions.

Sustainability

- **Preservation:** Digital products will be stored on secure, backed-up institutional servers with redundant offsite copies.
- **Curatorial Duration:** Master files and metadata will be curated indefinitely; web and social media content will be maintained for a minimum of five years, with regular updates.
- **Migration and Documentation:** Technical documentation, metadata schemas, and file formats will be recorded to enable future migration to new platforms or formats.
- **Institutional Commitment:** The Čatkú Arts Center will dedicate staff time and funding for ongoing maintenance, updates, and backups to ensure long-term sustainability of digital assets.

Through these strategies, the Čatkú Arts Center will create digital products that are available, accessible, and sustainable, while preserving the integrity of Indigenous cultural knowledge and supporting lifelong learning for diverse audiences. The plan ensures that digital content complements physical interpretive features, extends learning opportunities beyond the campus, and adheres to best practices for preservation, accessibility, and cultural stewardship.

Applicant Name: Red Cloud Indian School | Mahpiya Luta
 Project Title: Chatku Arts Center

Performance Measure	Data We Will Collect (e.g., counts, costs, weights, volumes, temperatures, percentages, hours, observations, opinions, feelings)	Source of Our Data (e.g., members of the target group, project staff, stakeholders, internal/external documents, recording devices, databases)	Method We Will Use (e.g., survey, questionnaire, interview, focus group, informal discussion, observation, assessment, document analysis)	Schedule (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, beginning/end)
Effectiveness: The extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results	At the end of each quarter, project staff will review installation and visitor engagement data to assess how well the new interpretive signage and landscape features contribute to increasing visitor understanding of Lakota culture and Indigenous art, comparing results against the intended learning outcomes outlined in the project plan.			
	At the end of each quarter, project staff will review data to assess how the new interpretive signage and landscape features enhance visitor understanding of Lakota culture and Indigenous art. Data collected will include installation records, visitor counts, survey responses, and qualitative feedback from comment cards and observations. Sources include contractor reports, visitor logs, and onsite and digital surveys. Data collection methods involve monthly tracking of installations and visitor use, with structured surveys administered quarterly. Staff will analyze this information quarterly to compare results against learning goals and adjust project activities as needed to ensure success.			
Efficiency: How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group	Monthly financial and progress reports will be analyzed to ensure that project funds, personnel time, and contractor resources are used optimally, minimizing costs while maximizing the quality and reach of interpretive materials and programming for the target audiences.			
	Each month, we will collect financial and progress data to monitor the efficient use of project funds, personnel time, and contractor resources. Sources of this data will include budget reports, payroll records, contractor invoices, and project status updates prepared by staff. Our method involves reviewing and analyzing these documents to track expenditures against the budget, assess resource allocation, and evaluate progress toward project milestones. This data will be compiled and reviewed monthly to identify any cost overruns or inefficiencies and to ensure that resources are being used effectively to maximize the quality and impact of the interpretive materials and programming for our target audiences.			

Quality: How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group	Following installation and launch events, visitor surveys and community feedback will be collected and reviewed quarterly to evaluate whether the interpretive content and tour experience meet the expectations and cultural standards of the Lakota community and other visitors.
	Following installation and launch events, we will collect visitor surveys and community feedback to evaluate whether the interpretive content and tour experience meet the expectations and cultural standards of the Lakota community and other visitors. Data will include completed survey responses, comment cards, and notes from informal interviews or discussions with visitors and community members. Sources of this data will be onsite participants, digital survey submissions, and community stakeholders involved in the project. Staff will administer structured surveys and gather qualitative feedback, then compile and analyze the information to assess satisfaction, cultural accuracy, and engagement. This data will be collected and reviewed quarterly, allowing project staff to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the interpretive experience aligns with community values and visitor expectations.
Timeliness: The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe	At the end of each month, project managers will compare completed project milestones, such as sign fabrication, site installation, and marketing outreach, with the original project timeline to verify that activities are progressing on schedule and adjust plans if necessary to meet the August 31, 2027 deadline.
	At the end of each month, project managers will collect data on completed project milestones, including sign fabrication, site installation, and marketing outreach, to assess progress relative to the original project timeline. Sources for this data will include contractor reports, staff progress updates, and internal project tracking documents. The method will involve reviewing milestone completion, comparing actual progress to the planned schedule, and documenting any delays or adjustments needed. This information will be collected and analyzed monthly, allowing project managers to identify potential schedule risks and make timely adjustments to ensure all project activities are completed by the August 31, 2027 deadline.