



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-259854-OMS-26

Project Category: Lifelong Learning

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

City of Platteville, Mining and Rollo Jamison Museums

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$20,086
Amount of cost share:	\$0

The Mining and Rolo Jamison Museums will complete a one-year project titled Building Experiential Museum Exhibitions through Professional Development. The project will engage a visiting curator to work with museum staff, emerging museum professionals, and a reputable local exhibit design and fabrication firm to develop experiential exhibitions that promote learning and discovery. The project will address the museum's aging and static exhibits, which have not changed significantly in more than a decade, while improving how visitors engage with shared local history through current museum best practices. Building on the museum's existing visiting curator program, which engages undergraduate and graduate students in creating year-long exhibitions, the project will encourage repeat visitation and provide valuable professional development opportunities. The project will benefit community members, museum visitors and staff, future museum professionals, and more than 1,400 elementary and middle school students who visit the museum each year.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- 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.

Project Category: Champion Lifelong Learning

1. Project Justification

The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums are seeking \$20,086 from the IMLS Inspire! Grants for Small Museums to support a one-year project titled “Building Experiential Museum Exhibitions through Professional Development.” The project addresses agency goal 1 to champion lifelong learning and both objectives 1.1 and 1.2. Furthermore, the project aligns with the Inspire program goal and more specifically objective 1 lifelong learning to support the development of experiential learning and discovery in small museums. The project will support the development of experiential learning and discovery in our small museum through a joint effort between the museum staff, emerging museum professionals, and a local reputable museum exhibit design and fabrication business. The project will address the museum’s aging and static exhibits that have not changed significantly in over a decade. It will also improve and expand the way our visitors learn about our shared local history using the most current and best practices in the museum field. Additionally, this project will build on current efforts to encourage repeat visitation to our museum through a visiting curator program where we install new exhibit displays on a yearly basis with the help of undergraduate and graduate students.

The aims of the project are consistent with numerous goals defined in the museum five-year strategic plan, which was approved by the Friends of the Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums and approved and adopted by the Museum Board on December 18, 2024. The most relevant strategic plan goals to this grant application are “to improve visitation and repeat visitation” and “Build and retain partnerships.”

The target group and beneficiaries of this IMLS project include community members and general museum visitors, our museum staff, and future museum professionals. In addition to benefiting our hyperlocal community, this project will improve the experience of more than 1,400 elementary and middle school students who visit the museum each year. Since so many local schools work with us to build field trip experiences, we are one of the most visited sites in our area and the improvements to our experiential opportunities will greatly benefit young students throughout the tri-state area of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois.

While the museum staff and museum board have made significant progress in identifying small projects such as redesign of interpretive panels, there have been financial and skill barriers to implementing the necessary larger changes. This project will allow us to take the steps that are needed to create interactive spaces that will repeatedly draw visitors into the museum.

2. Project Work Plan

Building Museum Exhibitions through Professional Development at the Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums will build on the efforts our board and staff set in place in our 2025-2029 strategic plan. In 2025 we hosted a visiting curator from the University of Milwaukee’s Public History Program who researched, designed, and curated an introductory exhibit display for our museum. Similarly, in 2026 we are working with students in the History program at the University of Wisconsin Platteville to create an exhibit display that will help our visitors transition from our mining displays to cultural lifestyle displays. This grant will help to continue and expand this already existing program in 2026 through 2027.

The overall goals of this project are related to exhibit updates, professional development, and community engagement and partnerships. For years the exhibits in our museum have been neglected because of lack of specific funding, staff time, and the skillset to build interactive displays, which has resulted in many community members commenting that there is no reason for them to return to the museum. Not only will these updates provide reasons

for our community members to visit the museum; they will also allow us to implement engaging exhibits rooted in current museum best practices. This will be done by working with historians at local universities as well as reputable museum exhibit designers and fabricators who are well versed in museum engagement as well as local needs and desires. This work will also result in the museum offering relevant and meaningful opportunities to emerging museum professionals. Through this process, they will hone their research, exhibit design, and presentation skills. The exhibits that they create will educate the roughly 8,000 visitors we welcome every year. Additionally, this project will boost our relationship with organizations and businesses that will help us move into the future with other interpretive projects after this one is completed.

Since we already have strong relationships with our partners that are needed to complete this project, we will be able to create quality exhibits in a timely fashion. Our first set of tasks once we receive the grant will be to create a design and implementation schedule with McCullough Creative, communicate with our list of local universities with related programs, and offer the visiting curator position to the most qualified student so they can work with the museum and McCullough Creative.

Once our initial team is formed, we will proceed based on the following priorities: Research based in primary and secondary research, accessible design, interactive design, dialogue-encouraging design, marketing, public presentation, and maintenance.

- 1) Research based in primary and secondary sources. Director Grabhorn will provide guidance for the visiting curator during weekly meetings. These will occur throughout the three-month process that the visiting curator works with museum staff.
- 2) Accessible design. Museum staff will work with the design and fabrication company to ensure that any designs have accessibility in mind. This subject will be addressed during monthly meetings between museum staff and the exhibit design and fabrication team.
- 3) Interactive design. Museum staff will identify artifacts or documents in our collections that can be reproduced or used in preservation safe ways to encourage interaction with the new exhibit. This can include, but is not limited to, tables, chairs, beds, journals, pictures, or any other items that would be present inside of a miner's badger hut. These conversations will also take place on a regular reoccurring basis.
- 4) Dialogue-encouraging design. Museum staff will work with local historians as well as the visiting curator to create an experience that encourages dialogue while visitors are at the museum and after they leave. An example of this would be to pose questions in the panels that help visitors to think about the exhibit and how it relates to their life in the 21st century.
- 5) Promotion plan. Although we are not asking for money to cover promotion costs, the project will help with our outreach plans. As part of the Museum's initiative to encourage repeat visitation that is listed in our five-year plan, we will host an exhibit opening reception for this new exhibit and highlight the accomplishments of the Visiting Curator. As part of this, we create post cards that are sent to our museum membership, send a press release out, and promote the event as well as the exhibit on our social media platforms. All marketing materials will mention that this experiential exhibit was funded by an IMLS Inspire! Grant for Small Museums.

6) Public Presentation. The big impact of this project will be the experiential exhibit, but we also will use it as an opportunity to host talks that delve deeper into the history of badger huts and the process of making this exhibit. The exhibit opening reception will be scheduled for mid-May so that our visiting curator has a chance to speak about the exhibit they helped to create.

7) Upkeep and Maintenance Plan. Museum staff will work with the exhibit design and fabrication company to create a maintenance plan to pre-empt any future costs of this exhibit. This may include touch ups to the facade of the badger hut or new supergraphics that will need to be installed to replace old and worn ones.

This project plan was developed by Cody Grabhorn with the help of Collections Manager Christina Grev and board members. Mr. Grabhorn has thirteen years of experience with museum interpretation and educational facilitation as well as five years of museum management at an executive level. Ms. Grev is a credentialed museum educator and collections specialist. Their resumes are included in this application packet. Grabhorn will manage the project and meet weekly with the visiting curator, and at least monthly with the exhibit design and fabrication company. He will also adhere to or adjust the schedule of completion as needed. If needed, he will obtain any complementary grants or philanthropic gifts to finish the project. Grabhorn and Grev have cultivated relationships with additional outside experts who are on call to advise when fresh perspectives or sounding boards are needed. Grabhorn will report on project progress to the Museum Board at monthly board meetings, and to the Platteville City Manager and City Council in monthly progress reports and quarterly meetings. Grabhorn and Grev will recruit the Visiting Curator who will work with the staff and design and fabrication company to provide the interpretive pieces to this project. Grev will also ensure that any artifacts are handled properly and that a catalog of them is performed correctly. See Schedule of Completion Plan and Logic Model for timeline and work plan details.

Following are some potential risks to the project along with how these risks will be addressed.

1) The number of in-person hours may be restricted by travel distances for the Visiting Curator, especially if the chosen visiting curator is attending school as far away as UW-Milwaukee or the University of Iowa. If the candidate cannot physically attend as much as a student who lives in town, museum staff will work to create virtual communication opportunities and research availabilities. Email and Microsoft Teams calls will serve as a sufficient way to continue making progress when the visiting curator cannot attend in person as much.

2) This project is in our main exhibit space and construction of a new exhibit will interfere with the experience of our visitors. Since this is the case, we will attempt to conduct and finish any of the larger building phases of this project in the winter months when we are not open for tours. If the construction period extends into our open season, museum staff will create temporary panels that explain what is being added so that any interpretation we will have for the final exhibit will be available for visitors to learn about while construction is taking place.

3) There is the possibility that in the process of our visiting curator choosing items to be included in the exhibit space, we need to conduct conservation work on said artifacts or documents. If this issue arises, we may find a temporary reproduction item to place in the exhibit while the artifact is conserved. Once the item is conserved, it can be placed in the exhibit, or the staff and board can decide if the reproduction is sufficient.

Nearly half of the financial resources of the Inspire! Grant will be applied for staffing, which includes the work of the Visiting Curator, Museum Director, and Collections Manager. The other half will be used to contract McCullough Creative to work with us on the design and construction of these exhibit spaces. An additional small portion will be used for the printing of interpretive panels designed by the Visiting Curator as well as small materials, marketing, and items needed for an opening reception for the exhibit.

Progress will be measured by tracking the completion of tasks as indicated per the Schedule of Completion, including the planning and implementation of tasks. Progress will be reported monthly to the Museum Board, Friends of the Museum Board, City Manager, and City Council.

3. Project Results

The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums' mission is to uncover, preserve, and share the diverse cultural history of the Upper Mississippi Valley Lead and Zinc Mining District. We offer educational experiences that inform and inspire by telling the region's rich stories. This project will drastically improve the educational experiences that we offer our residents and out-of-state visitors. While the project will help us to share the diverse cultural history of our area, it will also help us to offer educational experiences that inspire our community, emerging museum professionals, and our partners.

- 1) Addition of educational experiences - This project will drastically improve the educational experiences that we offer our residents and out-of-state visitors.
- 2) Offer professional development to emerging museum professionals - it will improve the way we offer professional development for emerging museum professionals. The project will help them to build a portfolio and a physical project in a museum that they can use while applying for career positions. This is a rare experience for emerging museum professionals, and we are very proud to offer the opportunity to learn by doing in a museum.
- 3) Offer professional development to museum staff - While the main professional development that is taking place is for the Visiting Curator, this will also serve as an opportunity for the museum staff to receive professional development. Working with a design and fabrication business will offer us the opportunity to work with tools that we may not usually have at our disposal. Seeing what can be done in our museum may inspire the staff to think in new ways and build new interactives for our guests.
- 4) Improve our relationship with a local and reputable museum exhibit design and fabrication business – This project will improve our relationship with a reputable museum exhibit design and fabrication company. This may work well for us in the future if we want to continue building professional grade exhibits that engage with our community.
- 5) Increased revenue long term - A long term result of this project will be an increase in revenue from reoccurring visitation that will allow us to continue to add more experiential opportunities for our visitors. Therefore, this project will be a catalyst for future additions to our programs and the way we interact with visitors.

City of Platteville, Improving Collections Care and Public Access at The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums

[illegible]

Performance Measurement Plan

Applicant Name: City of Platteville, The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums

Project Title: Building Experiential Museum Exhibitions through Professional Development

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	<i>The visiting Curator and Museum Director will have weekly meetings to discuss the progress of the interpretive side of the project. The progress will be compared with the intended project results to ensure we are on track.</i> <i>The Design and Fabrication contractor and Museum Director will have monthly meetings to discuss the progress of the design and fabrication side of the project. The progress will be compared with the intended project results to ensure we are on track.</i> <i>The director will create an overall monthly report at the end of each month based on the advancements discussed in regular meetings with the visiting curator and contract business.</i> <i>The monthly results will also be shared with the Museum Board who can offer any suggestions or helpful tips.</i> <i>Progress will also be measured qualitatively during annual employee evaluations of the Museum Director and Collections Manager.</i>			
Efficiency: How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group	<i>Twice, throughout the project we will assess the number of completed tasks on the Schedule of Completion versus time invested, and we will make course corrections as needed.</i> <i>Our Employee Evaluations also include a section that addresses employee efficiency. The results of the evaluation will be used to improve staff efficiency in this and similar projects.</i> <i>The number of volunteers who help with any small tasks included in this project and the amount of their hours volunteered will be recorded monthly in the volunteer log and the dollar value will be calculated annually</i> <i>The Project Director will record grant and philanthropic funds leveraged for the project and the additional work these funds enabled.</i>			

Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums | City of Platteville Museum Department
2026 IMLS Inspire! Grant for Small Museums

Quality: How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group	• <i>At the end of the project, staff and key stakeholders will be surveyed to assess how interactive our exhibit space is compared to prior to the project. They will also be asked to assess how much interaction they witness with the new exhibit display.</i> • <i>Survey results, online reviews, and comments from visitors, members, donors, and social media followers that are relevant to the exhibit will be recorded and used to guide the project and any similar projects in the future.</i> • <i>In the long term (1-3 years post-project), visitor surveys will be used to assess whether the project has met the expectations of the target group. With a goal of at least 80% of visitors reporting a “very good” or “excellent” rating for their experience at the museum and 80% reporting that they learned something from their visit.</i>
Timeliness: The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe	• The Museum Director’s Monthly report will list any key tasks from the Schedule of Completion that have been completed on schedule and any that are lagging along with reasons for the delay. • The Museum Director and Collections Manager will review the Schedule of Completion each month to determine the percentage of progress on each task, reassess the plan if needed, and prioritize work for the next month. • The Schedule of Completion includes the development of a comprehensive maintenance plan for the new exhibit. Once this plan has been developed to account for all aspects of the design, the Museum Director, Collections Manager, and Facilities Technician will review the calendar twice a year after the project is finished to ensure that the exhibit is properly cared for and will be available for an extended period.