



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-259858-OMS-26
Project Category: Lifelong Learning
Project Type: Small Project (\$5,000-\$25,000)

Historic BK House and Gardens

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$25,000
Amount of cost share:	\$15,200

The Historic BK House and Gardens will plan, promote, implement, and evaluate the Beautiful Spaces: BK House at 200 symposia series. The project will involve planning, marketing, and implementing two full-day symposia, a professional development workshop and youth-led social media campaign, launching public access to BK's collections and archives database, installing updated interpretive signage to facilitate guest learning during docent- and self-guided tours, and developing and administering evaluation surveys. The project will engage current BK visitors and members and attract new audiences of all ages to the physical site; expand accessibility through technology; provide professional development opportunities for staff when planning and implementing the symposia and in the use of technology; craft marketing and interpretive materials to expand the symposia promotion and elevate visitor experience; and develop effective instruments for evaluation. This project will benefit attendees of project-related events and guests on public tours, BK's social media followers, researchers, and staff and docents.

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.

NARRATIVE

A. Project Justification

Inspire Objective: For 200 years, Historic BK House & Gardens (BK) has graced the French Quarter with a unique presence that embodies the blend of cultures characteristic of the city itself – French, Swiss, Creole, African, Caribbean, and Sicilian. Life and time have taken their toll and, in recent years an extensive restoration has been undertaken to ensure the survival of our storied site. In the 1920s, it was the first local home to be saved by preservationists and for over 50 years, the house has been open to the public for tours, educational events, and research.

To build on this legacy, celebrate our Bicentennial, and use BK’s rich history to ensure sustainability for the future we request \$25,000 (total project budget \$40,200) for the planning, expansion, promotion, implementation, and evaluation of our “Beautiful Spaces: BK House at 200” symposia series. The “200” project will launch with the “Still Standing After All These Years” (September 2026) and conclude with “Luminaries and Scallywags” (March 2027) day-long symposia of lectures and discussion. Linking the two anchor events is a youth-led social media project in partnership with nonprofit Be Loud Studios as well as opening BK’s collections and historical archives to all interested audiences through online access powered by PastPerfect. “200” supports BK’s mission and strategic plan, while aligning with IMLS’s *Objective 1, Lifelong Learning*. More broadly, “200” directly aligns with all three IMLS agency goals and corresponding objectives by incorporating elements of knowledge-sharing, professional development (PD) for BK staff, public engagement and collaboration, and online access to BK’s archives and collections. If funding is declined, BK intends to host the September symposium as scheduled but will scale back or eliminate all other aspects of the project.

Advancement of Strategic Plan: BK undertook the development of an institutional strategic plan in 2012 which has been reviewed annually and revised every four years (most recently in 2024) as needed to meet changing needs in the community and ongoing preservation work in the house and gardens. BK’s strategic plan focuses on five core elements critical to house museum operations: (1) stewardship of place; (2) historical integrity; (3) inclusive storytelling; (4) community relevance; and (5) sustainability. “200” synthesizes all facets of BK’s mission and strategic plan into one comprehensive, year-long engagement project.

Challenge to Be Addressed: House museums such as BK straddle a fine line between preservation and relevance. Historic house museums only remain vibrant by transitioning from static, glass case-bound untouchable displays to dynamic community hubs that address complex, inclusive, and contemporary narratives. Accordingly, BK House has recently expanded our staff by adding the positions of Research & Collections Manager and Education & Programs Manager to guide the interpretation of BK’s site and the surrounding French Quarter as living, cultural spaces for all New Orleanians—not just tourist destinations or static collections of artifacts deemed

deserving of reverence. Recognizing the need to adapt and recontextualize, BK has recently begun updating our interpretive plan, corresponding tour script, and associated programming to include a more accurate, honest, and inclusive history of the property. As bluntly stated by the American Association of State and Local History, “The cultural tourism model has failed most house museums. Places of local—as opposed to regional and national—relevance, may suffer lingering deaths if they do not adopt new methods and philosophies. Inevitably, the roof will collapse, figuratively and literally” (Author, A. C. (n.d.). *House or Home? Rethinking the House Museum Paradigm*. AASLH. <https://aaslh.org/house-or-home-rethinking-the-house-museum-paradigm/>). Through projects like “200” which incorporate architecture and preservation alongside personal—often provocative—stories; BK is committed to being a living historic home that will not be discarded as a dusty relic of past generations. “200” will present the achievement of the following Inspire and BK House project goals to address sustainability through relevance (Table 1):

Component	Responsible Party(ies)	Justification	Agency Level Goal
GOAL 1: Engage current BK visitors/members and attract new audiences of all ages to the physical site through a comprehensive dive into BK’s architecture, craftsmanship, preservation, and diverse storytelling			
Two full-day symposia featuring speakers, panel discussions, and audience interaction	BK staff, Collections Committee Chair, contract speakers	Museums have a critical role to play in illuminating human artistry, ingenuity, emotion, differences, and collective experiences	Objective 1.1, Objective 2.1, Objective 2.2, Objective 3.2
GOAL 2: Expand BK historic home accessibility through technology (grant priority)			
Youth-led social media campaign, recorded interviews, and online archives	Be Loud Studios, PastPerfect, BK staff	Museums are becoming increasingly dependent on technology-based methods to attract and maintain audiences in the digital age	Objective 1.1, Objective 2.1, Objective 2.2, Objective 3.2
GOAL 3: Provide professional development opportunities for staff in symposia planning and use of technology (grant priority)			
BK staff attends symposia offered by local historic homes, institutes of higher education, and art museums; BK staff participates in ½ day PD on communicating stories digitally with Be Loud	Be Loud Studios, BK staff	Museums can only remain relevant by cultivating online methods for communicating and engaging with constituents; BK’s strategic plan identifies professional development for staff in this area as essential training	Objective 1.2, Objective Objective 3.1
GOAL 4: Craft “200” marketing and interpretive materials to expand symposia promotion and elevate visitor experience			
BK dedicates grant and general operating funds to launch a marketing campaign for the project, along with updated interpretive materials for guided/self-guided tours	Contract marketing professional (TBD), BK staff	Program success is not attainable without a robust marketing effort; new, project-specific interpretive signage for tours will engage new visitors and provide longtime supporters with a new experience	Objective 1.1, Objective 2.1, Objective 3.1
GOAL 5: Develop effective instruments for program evaluation that may be modified/applied to all BK community events			
BK staff creates project-based participant surveys (qualitative) and aggregates attendance numbers (quantitative)	BK staff, Collections Committee Chair	Museums miss opportunities for deeper community connections and improvements in programmatic/interpretative programming if stakeholders are not given the space to provide feedback	All Objectives

Audience: The home and gardens themselves are the central artifacts of the visitor experience, but do not engage most visitors alone. While BK recognizes the role robust tourism plays in longtime sustainability our humanities programs primarily serve residents of the French Quarter and surrounding neighborhoods (Tremé, Marigny, and Bywater) while welcoming participants from the greater New Orleans area. It is our neighbors of all ages and backgrounds who become BK Members, return guests, and community ambassadors.

BK aims to make the French Quarter more accessible to locals who may no longer feel represented in this historic neighborhood. To ensure that BK's educational and cultural programs meet the actual needs of our community—as opposed to what BK *presumes* guests want—community engagement, partnerships, and feedback is integral to the institution's strategic plan workplace ethos. In 2022 BK hired a consultant to lead Board and staff in a rebranding effort. Meetings and round-table discussions were conducted with neighbors, local museum professionals, docents, culture-bearers, educators, tourism leaders, and BK Members to inform the content/direction of interpretive services. Overwhelmingly, participants in this process cited the need for BK to continue to stand as a community hub (social, creative, family, business, and lastly as a historic home) for New Orleanians with diverse interests in the property and its inhabitants, as has been the case since the front door was first opened in 1826. BK also relies on our memberships in the French Quarter Museum Association, New Orleans Museum Educators, New Orleans & Co., Louisiana Office of Tourism, Midsouth Women in Tourism, and American Association of State and Local History for sound-boarding, collaborative programming, and idea-sharing in best practices.

BK's primary audience, including 135 BK Member households, is comprised of approximately 750 invested, local return visitors. BK symposia traditionally attract approximately 40 guests, but we believe the two symposiums in this project will attract the maximum 80 attendees per session. Ten students from Be Loud Studios will be involved in creating the accompanying social media content and schedule. BK has over 6.4K followers on Instagram, 3.4K on Facebook, and plan to expand to TikTok as part of the "200" initiative.

Beneficiaries: Ultimate beneficiaries of this project are four-fold: (1) attendees to project-related events and guests on public tours develop deeper understanding of the importance of historic home preservation in the context of the lives lived at the site/surrounding neighborhood; (2) BK's online audience remains open to life-long learning and engaged with the home through fresh perspectives of young people social media in partnership with Be Loud Studios; (3) researchers, likely BK's largest untapped group of beneficiaries, gain access to our collections and archives which have previously only been accessible by a visit to the site; and (4) BK staff develop technological, storytelling, and program planning skills through PD, increasing employee capacity, historical knowledge, experience in including youth voices, and overall institutional stability.

B. Project Work Plan

Specific Activities: BK's work plan for the "200" project was compiled with input from staff, Board (primarily Collections and Community Engagement Committees), and community partners. Activities include the following sequenced components, with a detailed breakdown included in the Schedule of Completion: (1) plan/coordinate with partners, symposia speakers, and vendors (September speakers will be selected prior to the start of the grant period); (2) launch marketing/promotion (beginning July 2026); (3) develop evaluation surveys tailored to attendees, partners, and staff; (4) host full-day September symposium featuring four speakers/panels, lunch, and closing discussion; (5) participate in ½ day staff (volunteer docents/Board members welcome) PD workshop with Be Loud Studios, staff attends local symposia (ongoing); (6) launch public access to BK's PastPerfect collections/archives database; (7) Be Loud Studios and BK staff lead full-day student introduction to the historic home to develop student-generated social media content (posted between symposia, Digital Project Plan *not* attached as only social media content will be created); (8) develop updated interpretive signage that illuminates to facilitate guest learning during docent- and self-guided tours; (9) March 2027 symposium to follow the fall format and include a segment presented by Be Loud Studios youth about their experiences and ideas for inclusive interpretation; (10) aggregate evaluation data to explore "what works" and "areas of improvement."

Risks: The primary risk to the project is the possibility of schedule disturbances due to inclement weather, particularly the opening symposium slated during the height of hurricane season. To mitigate, BK plans alternative dates coordinated with partners and vendors in advance for all summer and fall events. BK is experienced in offering historical, cultural, and educational programming, including symposia, so risks to the overall project are minimal. The PD component for incorporation of technology into interpretation (grant priority) will ensure staff capacity in this area and provide a knowledge base for future digital programming. Additional risks will be identified during implementation and problem-solved as they arise, ensuring maximum success of individual tasks and the project as a whole.

Project Management: BK has an extensive history of managing large, multifaceted programmatic and capital projects; our foundation of success is a small, but strong organizational structure, which facilitates quality and timely work and involves local and national expertise. "200" will be led by Education & Programs Manager Stephanie Heriger (role: Project Director). Elizabeth Simpson, Research & Collections manager will coordinate PastPerfect usage and interpretive materials (role: Project Information and Interpretation Director). BK's Executive Director Jen Gick will provide guidance in all aspects of implementation/evaluation, as well as budgeting and reporting (role: Fiscal Project Director, overall management). Key personnel have over 90 years' experience in project management.

Resources: BK is excited to move forward with "200." Staff is prepared for the time commitment of implementation and evaluation, with BK committing additional staff time and materials through the annual operating budget.

Tracking Progress: Progress toward achieving program goals, including adherence to budget and timeline, will be assessed monthly by the project team, with analytics run following each social media post to determine effectiveness in audience growth (Performance Measurement Plan).

C. Project Results

Results: Program success will be assessed by achievement of BK goals and fidelity to the IMLS Performance Measure evaluation plan.

Intended, measurable results (outcomes) are tied to project and IMLS goals.

GOAL	MEASUREABLE OUTCOME (quantitative and qualitative)
GOAL 1: Engage current BK visitors/members and attract new audiences of all ages to the physical site through a comprehensive dive into BK's architecture, craftsmanship, preservation, and diverse storytelling	<i>Outcome 1.1:</i> 80% of attendees believe/strongly believe symposia content was engaging/informative (Likert-scale survey) <i>Outcome 1.2:</i> 40% of symposium attendees are new to BK <i>Outcome 1.3:</i> 10% increase in membership numbers directly tied to "200" programming
GOAL 2: Expand BK historic home accessibility through technology (grant priority)	<i>Outcome 2.1:</i> 10% increase in BK social media "hits" <i>Outcome 2.2:</i> Successfully establish a presence on Tik Tok and online access to BK archives/collections database
GOAL 3: Provide professional development opportunities for staff in symposia planning and use of technology (grant priority)	<i>Outcome 3.1:</i> 100% of BK staff believe/strongly believe PD content was clear/informative (Likert-scale survey)
GOAL 4: Craft "200" marketing and interpretive materials to expand symposia promotion and elevate visitor experience	<i>Outcome 4.1:</i> Track attendee responses to "how they heard" about "200" to determine effectiveness of expanded marketing <i>Outcome 4.2:</i> Research, design, and display 10 new interpretive panels
GOAL 5: Develop effective instruments for program evaluation that may be modified/applied to all BK community events	<i>Outcome 5.1:</i> BK devises a Likert-scale survey to assess participant satisfaction that is adaptable to all programming

Audience Learning: BK is proposing the "200" initiative because it is a fitting celebration for our Bicentennial and we receive frequent questions regarding the construction of the house, artistry of the Free People of Color who built it, and its storied inhabitants. As the nation celebrates its 250th birthday, BK has noticed a renewed interest in historic preservation and discovery, particularly in New Orleans as a city older than the Nation! We believe "200" will broaden mindsets of our primary audience with the understanding that historic houses are more than dusty relics; they are *homes* inhabited by people who loved, made mistakes, were embroiled in rivalries, celebrated successes, and now inspire both ingenuity and reflection.

Products and Accessibility: Products include interpretive signage and knowledge-sharing online through social media and PastPerfect.

Sustainability: The nature of PD is sustainability, and, by the close of the project, BK staff will have participated in digital training and attended other local historical/cultural symposia both to learn about New Orleans history/culture and effective implementation. BK staff and Board continually seek ways to diversity funding through grants, corporate partnerships, and individual gifts. If funded BK will leverage IMLS funds and award prestige to ensure continuity in quality and relevant programming across audiences.

Applicant Name: Friends of Beauregard-Keyes House, Inc.

Project Title: Beautiful Spaces: BK at 200 Years

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	Example: At the end of each month, using a report prepared by the registrar, we will compare the cumulative count of rehoused objects against the total number proposed for the project. Example: At the end of each project year, our external consultant will present results of the ongoing observation-based evaluation and compare them against our intended project results.			
	Team Meetings: Program staff and leadership meet in-person weekly to assess program alignment to goals as it progresses and make adjustments as needed to be effective. Partner Meetings: BK Project Director meets in-person or virtually twice monthly with Be Loud to ensure timeliness and appropriateness of content. Marketing Meetings: BK Executive Director meets in-person or virtually twice monthly with contract marketing professional to information-share, develop content, and assess effectiveness of outreach based on symposium and general attendance/membership numbers and participant feedback. Leadership Meetings: BK staff meets with Board of Trustees President, Collections Committee Chair, and Engagement Committee Chair in-person or virtually monthly. Docents: Research and Collections Manager keeps docents informed of changes to the tour script and accompanying research. Engagement Data: Project Director will account for and assess symposia attendance and member numbers as compared to previous years. Partner Reviews (Be Loud and Contract Marketing Manager): Executive Director will determine the effectiveness toward stated objectives in the areas of PD and stakeholder engagement (ongoing). Online Collections Database: BK Research and Collections Manager will track online usage/inquires to gauge stakeholder interest in this new digital resource (ongoing).			
Efficiency: How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group	Example: Twice per year, we will assess our expenditures for program supplies on a per-person-served basis. Example: Each quarter, we will calculate the dollar value of volunteer hours contributed to the project as recorded in our online volunteer management system.			
	Budget: Project Director and Executive Director meet monthly to monitor expenditures and identify cost savings and/or minor redirections in grant funds usage to improve efficiency and results. Planning: Staff will conduct a planning, implementation, and budget analysis on the September symposium to inform improvements to the March installment.			
	Example: At the beginning, the mid-point, and end of the project, we will administer a satisfaction survey to staff who have participated in the training. Example: We will gather opinions about our online services through questionnaires provided to every 20th user.			

Quality: How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group	Staff PD - Digital: Through a Likert-scale based, post-workshop assessment, staff participating in Be Loud workshop will report “believe or strongly believe” that components improve knowledge of and identify opportunities for inclusion of technology/social media in interpretation and stakeholder communications. Staff PD – Attendance: Staff that attend symposia/workshops given by other local institutions will discuss learnings during regular weekly staff meetings. Symposium Attendees: Symposium guests will participate in a Likert-scale survey post-program to assess quality of content and delivery. Program Partners/Participating Students: Partners and staff will participate in a post-initiative discussion to assess quality of the partnership, deliverables, and overall experience. Docents: Monthly meetings with docents conducted by the Research and Collections Manager will illuminate appropriateness and quality of new interpretive content based on visitor feedback.
Timeliness: The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe	Example: <i>Every six months, our Project Director will assess the fit between our proposed Schedule of Completion and actual activity completion dates.</i> Example: <i>Each quarter, each project partner will submit to our Project Director a templated report showing their progress on meeting project milestones.</i> Team Meetings: Program staff and leadership meet in-person weekly to assess program alignment to goals as it progresses and adjust as needed to be effective. Evaluation: Prior to the end of calendar year 2026, Executive Director and Project Director aggregate data from September symposium to plan improvements for spring based on participant feedback and logistics. All program quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed and compiled into report form for IMLS and BK and disseminated to similar local organizations during summer 2027.