



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-260031-OMS-26
Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Access
Project Type: Small Project (\$5,000-\$25,000)

Holland Land Office Museum

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$25,000
Amount of cost share:	\$11,100

The Holland Land Office Museum will develop plans and specifications to upgrade their storage and preservation capacity to rehouse their collection of over 20,000 objects. Project activities will include facilitating a workshop to review the current collection storage area; reviewing and updating previous collection assessment; and developing a floor plan for storage equipment within the collection space. The project will involve hiring a consultant to work with the museum staff to carry out the project work and produce a final concept plan, which is an effort to enhance the Collections Assessment for Preservation survey that was completed in 2024. Successful completion of the project will be improved preservation of the museum's collection so that it will be protected for years to come.

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.

HOLLAND PURCHASE HISTORICAL SOCIETY / HOLLAND LAND OFFICE MUSEUM

NARRATIVE

Project Justification

The Holland Purchase Historical Society/Holland Land Office Museum (HLOM) seeks a \$25,000 Inspire! Grant for Small Museums for consulting services for an assessment and recommendations for upgrading the storage and preservation capacity of its collection of over 20,000 objects. This project responds to IMLS's Objective 3: Collections Stewardship and Access—Support the Management and Care of Collections in Small Museums. Funding sought from the IMLS will support the consulting costs; HLOM will contribute the time, and percentage of the salaries, of the staff who will participate in and manage the project.

This project is part of a careful step-by-step process to both protect and provide access to HLOM's collection, which includes artifacts dating from the beginning of the 18th century to the present. The care and maintenance of the collection was one of five strategic goals included in HLOM's 2021 Strategic Plan and was reinforced in HLOM's 2025 Strategic Plan update. Included in this goal is the preservation and conservation of the collection, with a focus on at-risk collection objects.

In 2024, with funding provided by Greater Hudson Heritage Network, HLOM was able to purchase a Nilfisk vacuum to allow staff to clean and preserve its collection. HLOM was also able to purchase some packing materials, as well as cotton dust covers to protect HLOM's significant costume collection, which has been stored under a makeshift cover of Polyethene bags to protect the garments from the dust and dirt of the old building.

To further its collection preservation goals, in 2024 HLOM applied for and received a \$25,000 grant from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation to purchase equipment and software to digitize the museum's collection and make it available online. With the hiring in 2023 of the museum's first curator, HLOM begin the digitization of its collection. Thanks to this grant, the collection is now 90% catalogued as of the end of 2025.

With the digitization of the collection now close to completion, HLOM is seeking support for the continued care of its collection.

HLOM's historic collection contains military items, local historical records, fine art, an expansive 2,000-piece costume collection ranging from the mid-1700's to the 1970s, numerous 3-D objects, including ceramics, military and farming equipment, tools, furniture and more, and landscape and portrait paintings from a variety of time periods. The collection also includes archives composed of documents, letters, posters and more that record the region's history. The most unique and prominent items within the collection include General Emory Upton's collection, Joseph Ellicott and the Holland Land Office Collection, various military items (mostly World War II), The Linden Murders collection, the Richmond Family collection, and various costume pieces within the HLOM costume collection. A unique item in the Holland Land Office Collection is a set of the original ledgers from the Holland Land Office. This is one of only a few sets currently in existence in America as most were sent back to the Netherlands when the Holland Land Company closed. The above collections are highly sought after; we regularly receive inquiries about these objects.

The museum's physical collection is stored on the building's second floor, where it is largely inaccessible to the public due to limited space, a steep staircase, and the artifacts' fragility. In addition, like many historical society collections maintained largely by volunteers, collection storage practices to date have not been ideal: objects are not properly stored based on need and materials and until recently, plastic covers have been used to protect the museum's costume collection. The collection is currently stored in crowded conditions on open shelving and individual items are boxed in groups or remain uncovered. The costume collections are currently stored on open racks with no individual coverings; many of the objects have not been properly cleaned since they arrived at the museum, which has caused some objects to suffer. The Erie County Ledgers from the Holland Land Company have been improperly stored since they arrived at the museum. The collection has undergone a great transformation in just a year to address some of the issues to the best of the museum's ability, both capacity and budget-wise. With the addition of a museum curator, HLOM was able to address immediate concerns regarding the collection: storing and separating distinct collections, the creation of an archive to store paper objects separately, addressing outdated storage methods and transforming them to modern-day protocols, and cleaning up and organizing the collection for better storage and access. Also, with the addition of a curator, HLOM has been able to refine and update the collection to modern-day standards: updating PastPerfect with additional and correct information, deaccessioning and relocating objects based on the museum's collection policy, and giving proper training to volunteers.

To address the collection's physical storage issues, HLOM received \$8,000 in funding from the American Institute of Conservation to hire conservator Lisa Goldberg and Architect Lindsay Yoder to undertake a Collections Assessment for Preservation (CAP) survey to evaluate the collection and develop a plan for improving collection care. Her final CAP Assessment was approved by the Board in 2024. HLOM is taking steps to follow her priority recommendations for collections care by submitting this funding request to develop plans and specifications for rehousing its collection.

The audience for this project consists of residents in Western New York, including the cities of Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse, as well as historians from the region and beyond, as well as a broad-based online audience. Audiences for tours of the museum and its collection include school groups from three local schools and outreach to an additional three schools, local libraries, senior groups, and historical societies as well as special programs for 4th graders on Native American culture in Western New York.

Beneficiaries of this project are HLOM's in-person audiences named above, which in 2025 numbered over 5,500 people annually, 3,500 of which visited the museum and 2,000 of which attended programs. Attendance includes admissions, special events, general programs, tours, and community use of space.

Characteristics of our visitors in 2025 included:

- 500 children under 10 were served through our youth programs
- 100 students (up to college age) were served through our tours, school programs and internships
- 2,500 seniors and 3,000 adults visited the museum and participated in our programs
- Over 65% of our visitors were from outside of the county

- Visitors hailed from over 40 different states and foreign countries including Canada, Indonesia, China, the Netherlands, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

In addition, project beneficiaries include our on-line audience; in 2025, over 10,000 views have been recorded on our digital programs and Artifact Video Series, Guest Speaker, Concert, and Java with Joe E. recordings.

Project Work Plan

HLOM's current Curator, Rachel Bellis, will serve as the Project Director. Together with HLOM's Executive Director Ryan Duffy, she will initiate this project by arranging an initial workshop meeting with the selected consultant team to review the current collection storage areas.

The Work Plan, also set forth in the attached consultant proposal, will take place in two phases:

- Phase One – Collection Assessment and Equipment Program
- Phase Two – Concept Development

Included in the Work Plan is one on-site workshop, Workshop One. Workshop Two will be undertaken as a web-based meeting.

1.0 PHASE ONE – Collection Assessment Review & Equipment Program

1.1 Preparation, Review & Project Initiation

- Compilation and review of all background material, including existing Collection Assessment report and facility plans.
- HLOM to provide all existing collection data and all available drawings and information on existing building.
- WBA to identify required information that is missing from the existing Collection Assessment and other documents.

1.2 Workshop One

- Meet with HLOM Executive Director to discuss:
 - Scope of project, what is known to date and what are the major issues to be addressed.
 - Outstanding project management issues and schedule.
 - Strategize about gathering outstanding required information
- Meet with HLOM Curator and collections staff/volunteers to discuss:
 - Existing facilities – strengths/weaknesses and renovation plans
 - Parameters for reusing existing or purchasing new equipment.
 - Options and preferences in terms of new equipment types.
 - Standardization of equipment across collections wherever possible.
 - Maximum equipment height parameters.
 - Whether equipment is required for any collection management areas
- Facility walk-through:
 - Walk through existing collection facilities to discuss strengths/weaknesses and needs.
 - Walk through spaces designated for collections and discuss opportunities.

1.3 HLOM Tasks

- Collection Assessment Review
 - Gather data required to supplement existing Collection Assessment

1.4 WBA Tasks

- Collection Assessment Review
 - WBA to provide ongoing support via email & phone to HLOM staff as they gather collection data needed to supplement existing Collections Assessment.
 - Based on existing Collections Assessment and receiving supplemental data from staff, WBA will analyze the collection storage needs and establish specific equipment types, quantities, sizes. As well, document the clearances required to access and handle the collection.
- Collection Management Facilities
 - Based on discussions from Workshop One, WBA will document and define whether improvements can be made.
- Equipment Program Requirements & Space Block Diagram
 - Prepare a list identifying storage equipment and floor area requirements for the HLOM collections.
 - Develop a space block diagram illustrating required equipment, circulation requirements and zoning.

2.0 PHASE TWO – Concept Development

2.1 WBA Tasks

- Develop concepts
- Based on the Equipment Program and establish spatial requirements, develop concepts for equipment layout within the collection spaces of the HLOM

2.2 Workshop Two

- Meet with HLOM Executive Director and Curator to:
- Review Phase One deliverables
- Review key takeaways from Collection Assessment review and supplemental data collection and identify issues and concerns.
- Review Equipment Program and its spatial requirements
- Review and discuss equipment layout concepts for the HLOM

2.3 HLOM Tasks

- Provide feedback on Phase One deliverables

2.4 WBA Tasks

- Refine Phase One deliverables based on HLOM feedback
- Refine equipment layout concepts based on discussions with HLOM during Workshop Two

Implementation of the project will involve HLOM's two staff members, five Collections Committee members, and our consultant team, which will provide advice and answer questions as needed. The Curator will spend roughly 70% of her time to initiate and implement this project. HLOM's Executive Director will spend approximately 30% of his time overseeing the project, including the administrative and budgetary aspects of the project. The time expended by the Executive Director and Curator is an in-kind contribution to this project by HLOM.

The project proposed here involves minimal risk since the project involves a single in-person visit by the consultant team. The bulk of the work to be accomplished involves research undertaken by the consultant team based on information provided by HLOM and their findings during the initial visit.

Progress on the project will be tracked through regular meetings with the consultants, through the second workshop, and through staff and Collections Committee review of progress reports.

Project Results

The intended results of this project are to improve the preservation of the museum's collection so that it will be safely protected for years to come. Project deliverables include:

Consultant Team Phase One Deliverables:

- Colored plans of existing collection facilities.
- Equipment Program and spatial requirements based on review of Collection Assessment and facility's collection areas:
- Collection equipment requirements including quantities and types.
- Floor area requirements for collections housed in compacted or stationary equipment.

Consultant Team Phase Two Deliverables

- Concepts for the HLOM collection facilities to include:
- Plans, sections and elevations as required to illustrate the equipment layout concept
- 3D digital diagrams of proposed collection facilities
- Legends and schedules describing the equipment furniture included in the concept

As a result of this project, staff, Collections Committee, and Board members will have the opportunity to get to know more about the museum's collection storage system and the improvements needed to safely protect HLOM's unique collection. For many decades, the collection has not received the attention it deserves in capacity or manner. This project is another step in HLOM's long-term, step-by-step plan to address this situation.

Once this project is completed, HLOM will be positioned to apply for further grant funding to purchase and install the equipment recommended to rehouse its collection. The learning and benefits from this project will be sustained through the continued care and maintenance of the collection. Going forward, museum staff and volunteers will continue to implement museum best practices in the storage of the collection—rehousing additional objects as needed over time and ensuring that new collection acquisitions are stored using proper archival storage methods.

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