Museums Empowered

Sample Application ME-258354-OMS-25

Norfolk Botanical Garden

Amount awarded by IMLS:	$181,492
Amount of cost share:	$202,915

Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) will implement a staff development initiative aimed at equipping staff to effectively utilize digital technology for interpreting plant collections in the new Perry Conservatory. The project activities include the creation of digital content for dynamic, tech-based interpretive experiences, moving away from static signage to interactive tools that engage visitors. The initiative also supports the creation of an Interpretive Master Plan that will create a framework for ensuring that all content for digital technology meets institutional goals. Insight gained through evaluation of new technology, research at other botanical gardens and museums, and input from staff who are stakeholders in the program will build the capacity to introduce a new innovative educational technology-based learning experience to the Perry Conservatory.

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 current Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

NBG Conservatory Connect: Building Staff Capacity for Creating and Implementing Interactive Interpretation in the Perry Conservatory Using Digital Technology

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Project Alignment to Museums Empowered Program Goal and Objective: The Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) respectfully requests $181,492 to support our new two-year Conservatory Connect staff training initiative that is designed to enhance employees' ability to create, implement, and evaluate interpretation methods of the new digital technology innovations included in the new Perry Conservatory. *The Garden of Tomorrow*, opening in November of 2025, will transform NBG into *The Garden of Today* with the largest expansion in its 85-year history. Three new buildings will welcome visitors: the Brock Entry Pavilion and Bistro, the 26,000-square-foot Perry Conservatory with tropical rainforest and desert biomes, and the Brock Environmental Education Center (BEEC). The NBG Conservatory Connect technology-based interpretive initiative will be an integral part of the visitors' experiences, and these innovations can help guide them to learn about and connect with the plants of the Perry Conservatory. To be fully effective, the messages must be closely aligned with our interpretive goals and branding guidelines across the entire organization. The NBG Conservatory Connect project aligns with the Museums Empowered Program Goal 1, Digital Technology, Provide museum staff with the skills to integrate digital technology into museum operations, and the associated Objective 1.2 to "support staff learning and integration of digital tools and services that enhance access to museum collections." The NBG mission to "***Immerse visitors in a world of beauty, lead through environmental action and inspire through education and connection to nature"*** closely aligns with the IMLS Agency Level Goal I to Champion Lifelong Learning and each objective within the category: 1.1: Advance shared knowledge and learning opportunities for all and 1.2: Support the training and professional development of the museum and library workforce.

Strategic Plan Alignment: As a key part of the 2024 Strategic Plan NBG is "***committed to innovation through the continuous exploration and implementation of cutting-edge horticulture practices and interactive technologies to elevate the visitor experience."*** To enable NBG to embed this goal across every level of operations, we recognize the need to formalize our interpretive messaging, create understanding and buy-in for all staff on technology utilization and encourage continued research and evaluation of the use of technology throughout NBG's procedures.

Project Background/Needs to Be Addressed: The design of these new *Garden of Tomorrow* buildings incorporates a "transparency of purpose" concept that places the focus on the gardens and surrounding landscape rather than the structures themselves by strategic use of glass, open air and connecting elements that flow from one location to another. As visitors enter the new Brock Entry Pavilion**,** they will be immersed in a new experience built around our mission *to connect people to nature through the world of plants*. Visitors will be visually encouraged to explore the adjacent courtyard that connects to the two-story 26,000 square foot Perry Conservatory which highlights the biodiversity of a place where a tropical rainforest meets the deserts of the western United States. An elevated skywalk will lead visitors from the two-story tropical oasis inside and provide an outdoor birds-eye view of the Bicentennial Rose Garden, the largest of its kind on the US East Coast. A green roof will supply fruits, vegetables and herbs to our new Café Bistro. Both our youth and adult audiences will find innovative programs in the newest addition to the *Garden of Tomorrow*, the Brock Environmental Education Center. The parking lot will be transformed into the Brock Parking Garden, an innovative combination of functional and green space that will include new tree plantings, permeable surfaces, and a rain garden.

Before the opening of the conservatory, the interpretation emphasis of our education and marketing plans were focused around a plant collection that has been grown almost exclusively outdoors across our 175-acre campus. The Perry Conservatory will provide a new opportunity for utilizing high-tech interpretation in a more compact and lushly planted indoor growing space. In place of the static signs that identify plants, NBG will introduce a new interpretive experience (Phase I of Conservatory Connect) that digitizes the horticultural information and cultural stories of the plants that are growing. This product will be designed by the Grow digital marketing firm and installed prior to the opening of the conservatory. The Kiosk Mode of the digital tool will loop until a user selects an item from the showcase view. Once selected, visitors will receive detailed information

about the selected plant or piece of artwork. Visitors will also have access to this platform on their personal devices via a QR code with content available in both English and Spanish. NBG will grow plants of critical importance to conservation and cultural interest. The staff who have chosen and collected the plants, are responsible for growing them, and for interpreting the plants' historical and potential future importance will contribute to the telling of these stories. As a museum with a living collection, responsive and easily updatable technology can play a vital role in interpreting seasonal changes and temporary areas of interest much better than permanent signage. To fully measure and improve the impacts that this digital technology innovation can have for our visitors, NBG staff will be inspired and empowered to use the new technology and contribute to its success. Without additional research, training and structure for updates, the technology introduced at the opening of the conservatory will retain a more fixed informative format than if it is updated regularly utilizing comprehensive, collaborative and staff-designed interpretation initiatives.

Target Audience: The target group for building and implementing the program will be the NBG Conservatory Connect team, consisting of one new position, the Interpretive Technology Specialist (ITS), that will be fully devoted to the project and 6 full-time staff members whose participation will make up a percentage of their workload. These staff members will be responsible for creating the content that will populate the new technology initiatives. The primary audience to receive the 10-hour training, created and implemented by staff on the Conservatory Connect team, will be 50 full- and part-time staff members, primarily from the horticulture, education, and visitor services departments who are responsible for guiding the visitor experience to include use of the technology. A 5-hour training will also be created and implemented for 30 volunteers who are stationed in the Conservatory over the two-year program.

Ultimate Beneficiaries: In addition to the staff who take part in the project's training, visitors to the Perry Conservatory will be the long-term beneficiaries. We expect 50,000 visitors in the first 3 months of opening with sustained visitation of at least 450,000 per year that is projected to grow to over 700,000. The use of this technology in a digital format will allow visitors to be immersed in a more natural and sign-free environment with the opportunity to learn more specific content through technology. Front-line staff will be able to give better answers to visitor queries by navigating through the digital application. Essentially, each staff member and guest will have immediate access to all content about the conservatory that is curated by NBG staff research, expertise, and experience.

PROJECT WORK PLAN

Project Activities: The project work plan consists of four main components each with a distinct outcome: the creation of an Interpretive Master Plan, the development and implementation of a staff and volunteer training program for Phase I interpretive technology, and a visitor engagement survey combined with visits to other botanical gardens and museums to evaluate digital technology interpretation. These four aspects of the project will lead to the creation of a content creation format for existing technology and the design and implementation of a new interactive digital experience. The components will overlap in completion sequence and will take place over two years.

- Hire an Interpretive Technology Specialist and form the Conservatory Connect team: The first step for the project will be to hire an Interpretive Technology Specialist (ITS) to act as project manager under the supervision and guidance of Kelly Welsh, the Chief of Marketing. This new staff member will be responsible for collaborating with Grow marketing firm to update content and train staff to use digital interpretation. They will be part of the team that creates an Interpretive Master Plan and will oversee the evaluation of visitors' use of NBG Conservatory Connect. The ITS will be responsible for working with the team to create a structure for the formation of new content, starting with a mechanism for staff and volunteers to recommend content topics. Once a topic is approved by the Conservatory Connects team the ITS will collect relevant information and research from NBG staff, write the new content, and input it into the digital interpretation format. The step will be completed with the introduction of the training guide that will be added to the hiring process for all staff and volunteers who will work in the conservatory.

In the six months following the introduction of the digital platform, a Conservatory Connect training team will be formed to oversee the implementation of training. This team will work closely with the NBG Education Department to ensure the smooth integration of the system and provide guidance to staff on content submission procedures.

Phase 1: Onboarding and Training for Content Submission: All staff, including current and new hires, will undergo a comprehensive training session to familiarize them with the platform. The training will cover topics such as how to submit information, best practices for creating educational content, and the process for ensuring that submitted content meets the NBG's standards for accuracy and educational value.

Phase 2: Continuous Support and Feedback Loop: Following the initial training, the Conservatory Connect training team will provide ongoing support, including troubleshooting, Q&A sessions, and periodic check-ins. A feedback mechanism will be built into the platform so that staff can submit questions or challenges they encounter. The team will also conduct regular audits of the content submitted to ensure consistency, clarity, and factual accuracy.

Phase 3: Integration of Training Guide into Hiring Process: After the successful implementation of the content submission system and a period of ongoing training, a *Training Guide* will be developed. This guide will document best practices for interpretive content creation, submission protocols, and platform usage. The guide will become a required part of the onboarding process for all new staff and volunteers working in the conservatory. All new hires will be expected to complete the training as part of their initial orientation, ensuring they are fully prepared to contribute to the interpretive content.

- Create an Interpretive Master Plan (IMP): The investment in a formal Interpretive Master Plan would provide a framework for messaging, branding and educational interpretation for overall garden operations and will be integrated into the Conservatory Connect digital initiative. NBG's commitment to create strategies for sharing our mission and key messages is written into the Strategic Plan as a goal to **"Strengthen interpretation to increase appreciation of the Garden's collections and history**". As an organization, we produce a vast amount of content for lifelong learning through in-person classes and tours, signage on site, and digitally through our website. Because multiple departments play key roles in delivering our content and messages to our audience, it is essential to have a cohesive voice. The project, beginning in late 2025 (exact date determined depending on the timing of availability of the consultants from Lennox Insites) will consist of consultant-led background research, visitation analysis, a visitor study report, community meetings, and will be completed by the winter of 2026 (Lennox Insites Proposed Scope of Work & Estimate is Supportingdoc1). We will show that the use of thoughtfully planned and well evaluated technology can promote an immersive visitor experience that helps them find content most relevant and interesting to them. In 2022 NBG was honored to be reaccredited by the American Alliance of Museums (a status only held by 3% of botanical gardens in the US). Through the renewal process the NBG Education Department met each of the criteria standards for reaccreditation, including each of the goals for onsite interpretation. NBG interpretation was deemed as "accurate, informed and professionally presented," "developed in accordance with and presented with clear ties to educational standards and curricula" and inclusive of "community/stakeholder voices in interpretation." By building on this successful assessment of past efforts we can work to clearly align these standards to our technology-based NBG Conservatory Connect through an IMP.

- Train staff and volunteers to use NBG CONSERVATORY CONNECT technology and incorporate this training throughout NBG's Procedures: A Conservatory Connect team will consist of members of the education, marketing, horticulture, and visitor services departments. Coordinated by the ITS, they will design a comprehensive manual and training program for current and future NBG staff. The interpretive content that is imported into the NBG Conservatory Connect system will be collected and written by NBG staff, including informational text and imagery. This training program will also incorporate a system for all staff to submit information to be considered by the NBG Education Department as interpretive content. In the six months after the introduction of the technology, an NBG Conservatory Connect team will implement new staff training. This step will be completed with the introduction of the training guide that will be added to the onboarding process for all staff and volunteers who will work in the conservatory. The program will be used to ensure that staff are able to effectively contribute to the interpretation on the front end, and then

to utilize the technology to find the most appropriate and engaging information for our guests. The Conservatory Connect team will create the training October-November of 2025, with a 10-hour training implemented for 50 staff members in the early winter, and an additional 15 new seasonal staff members over the following 16 months. At least 20 volunteers will undergo a 5-hour training each year in 2025 and 2026.

- Utilize the Measurement of Museums Social Impact Study to evaluate use of Phase I NBG Conservatory Connect technology: While a full-garden visitation survey will take place through the Interpretive Master Plan process, a more focused study of the use of the Conservatory Connect technology will be led by NBG staff. The goal of this effort will be to gain meaningful data about the visitor experience, but also to build staff capacity for further audience-based research. The ITS will work with **Meredith Zadd,** the Director of Visitor Engagement, to lead an evaluation team of volunteers and visitor services staff to carry out informal interviews followed by Constant Contact web-based experience evaluations of 100 visitors to the Perry Conservatory who utilize the Conservatory Connect technology. The ability to gain and measure meaningful data regarding the outcomes of visitor engagement is imperative to the success of our NBG Conservatory Connect initiative. Participants will be chosen by reaching out to non-members who have visited the Garden in the year prior to the opening of *The Garden of Tomorrow*, and at random from a pool of NBG Members. The number of participants will be chosen with the expectation that not all will complete the full 3-visit evaluation process, but that that enough people are chosen at the outset to have at least 100 complete the process. After filling out a pre-survey, each person will be granted admission times for entry to the Garden. Non-members will not be required to pay admission and as an incentive to participate, NBG Members will be entered in a drawing to have their next year's membership renewed for free. This study will utilize the tools created through the “Measurement of Museum Social Impact” (MOMSI) study a Utah Division of Arts & Museums through an IMLS National Leadership Grant to Expand Social Impact. Meredith Zadd will also ask NBG staff to test the technology prior to opening of the Perry Conservatory in October of 2025 and fill out the proposed visitor survey. The purpose of this step is to have staff experience the use of the technology from the visitor’s perspective and to provide feedback on whether survey questions are effective in garnering valuable input. The first visit for survey participants will take place within six months of opening, the second between 6-12 months after opening and new content has been added, and the third between April-July of 2026 to evaluate the final part of the program: the new SUPERPOWER OF PLANTS experience. After each visit, participants will complete a survey created utilizing the Continued Learning and Engagement questions outlined in the MOMSI. The ITS will coordinate this survey and the data analyzation /interpretation and will then create a report to present to staff members who are part of the NBG Conservatory Connect training team. Results of this data analysis will be used to guide future projects related to digital and other forms of interpretation both in the Perry Conservatory and in other aspects of NBG procedures and education. One outcome of the evaluation will be to develop ways to overcome the expected understanding that the use of technology may inhibit the visitor’s sense of immersion into nature. While the original design of MOMSI was more comprehensive in measuring social impact of the entire visitor experience, the scope of our research will focus primarily on the Education and Engagement aspect of the MOMSI program. Additionally, Meredith Zadd will utilize the findings of the 2020 MOMSI Social Impact Studio pilot project that analyzed the findings from 38 museums around the country (Museum Social Impact Study Toolkit is Supportingdoc2).

  NBG will utilize the Constant Contact survey tool to collect survey results. The MOMSI toolkit provides step-by-step instructions for qualitative analysis using the Six Step Thematic Analysis Process and recommends that museums take on this process in-house. Quantitative data will be measured through a Paired Sample t-test utilizing Microsoft Excel, a process also explained in detail through the MOMSI report. These reports will provide valuable measurable statistics regarding the pre and post visit attitudes. Grow will also implement Google Analytics within the Application to track interaction metrics and behaviors for visitors who are not part of the study.

- Visit other institutions utilizing digital technology for interpretation and work with Grow to create and implement Phase II of NBG Conservatory Connect, an interactive digital learning experience in the Perry Conservatory: The culmination of our NBG Conservatory Connect initiative will be the creation of Phase 2

of the new technology, an immersive digital game that will allow guests to dig deeper into their conservatory collection-related interests. Before building this experience, NBG staff members will travel to three other metropolitan areas with gardens and museums that have apps and other immersive digital experiences as part of their visitor engagement. Each trip will include a staff member from the horticulture, visitor services, marketing, and education department each visiting the Chicago Area (potential locations: Chicago Botanical Garden, The Museum of Science and Industry and the Field Museum) and New York City (Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York Botanical Garden and The American Museum of Natural History). Additionally, the ITS will attend the summer 2026 American Public Garden Association Conference (location to be determined) to connect with other colleagues to share the impact of our NBG Conservatory Connect program. Using the information gathered at other museums, the data collected from the MOMSI-based study and the IMP, NBG will have the tools to create and implement Phase II of NBG Conservatory Connect: the SUPERPOWER OF PLANTS experience. These elements will encourage visitors to engage with educational content in new ways, leaning into principles of the gamification of learning. Grow will develop 3 potential concepts to add persistent experiential opportunities. Potential areas to explore include: (1) Enhancing the Digital Kiosk experience to add themes (e.g., a "Super Hero" mode where visitors can explore plant superpowers) and record their progress exploring plants and biomes. (2) Adding 3D interactive components to digital learning points of interest, letting visitors explore plants in ways not physically available (e.g., showing how plants grow, bloom, and thrive/perish in different environments and at different times of the year) or (3) Allowing visitors to create digital plant avatars that evolve as educational content is consumed. Grow will upgrade the previously purchased hardware to accommodate new experiences (Grow Experiential Learning Integration Scope of Work is Supportingdoc3). Work will begin in the spring of 2026 and be completed when the SUPERPOWER OF PLANTS is introduced in the summer of 2026, followed by the final phase of evaluation with the participants third visit to the Garden.

Project Risk and Mitigation Strategies: Staff turnover is always a risk to the success of a project, especially in the non-profit sector and in a regional area with a workforce reliant on the hiring of members of military families who are assigned to a temporary duty station in or around Norfolk. NBG recognizes that as staff are trained in the NBG Conservatory Connect initiative they may move on to other jobs. To mitigate loss of institutional knowledge due to staff turnover, all current senior staff identified as having a stake in this program have worked at the garden between 5 and 20 years, so turnover of any individual will be overcome by the expertise of other key staff. The ITS will work closely with partners in each department to oversee the entire project, so if there was turnover in the position there would be another member of the NBG team with understanding of each element of the program. Frequent documentation of progress will also ensure that the project continues efficiently regardless of any changes to the staffing. The creation of the IMP will also help to guide the future process without relying on any individual staff members to "rewrite the script."

A second risk that NBG has experienced with a technology-related initiative is not having full staff buy-in for the program. In response to the COVID 19 pandemic's need for social distancing, NBG Education staff developed content for the NBG Nature Quests App. Culture Connects hosted the platform and it was available to visitors between September 2020- August 2022. While we noted some success in use by our regular NBG Members, the use of the App was not widely adopted by our visitation. One factor contributing to limited success was likely the introduction of the Nature Quests App during a time that staff could not collaborate as easily face-to-face. This led to the longer-term understanding that the App was primarily of use to only families with young children and therefore contribution of content, providing instruction for/ encouraging its use for visitors was limited to only one department. By making the technology a key part of the experience with capabilities for all types of visitors and by ensuring that all staff understand the use of the technology and contribute to its success we hope to mitigate the "buy-in" risk.

Team and Organizational Structure: The **ITS,** a new IMLS-funded position, will act as project manager, with direct oversight from **Kelly Welsh, Chief Marketing Office**r, for staff development related to technology and evaluation. Once hired, the ITS will oversee the integration of the new technology in the Perry Conservatory and collaborate with the education, visitor services and marketing staff to ensure that the innovations meet the needs of the garden's visitors. The ITS will be the part of the team working with a consultant to create the new Interpretive Master Plan to ensure that it meets our goals for interpretation integration into technology-based

initiatives. **Meredith Zadd,** Director of Member and Visitor Experience will act as the liaison between the Visitor Services Department and the IT Interpretation Specialist. She will be the primary staff to institute staff training initiatives and evaluation utilizing the Measurement Museum Social Impact Study and will work with the ITS to interpret the results of the study.

Theresa Augustin, the Vice President of Education, and **Kelly Welsh**, will be the lead NBG staff working with consultant Chuck Lennox to create and implement an Interpretive Master Plan. Theresa has worked at NBG for over 24 years and her first 16 years were as a Horticulturalist and as the Curator in the Natural Areas. In her 10 years as leader of the Education Department (encompassing youth, adult education, and volunteer services) she has been instrumental in building staff's horticulture expertise into NBG interpretation. This project will be collaborative with the entire education team's two Department Directors, each with 12+ years on staff at NBG (**Beverly Albright**, Youth Education Director and **Alex Cantwell**, Adult Education Director) with input from their direct reports, including the Manager of Volunteer Services, School Programs Manager, Adult Education Manager, and part-time staff educators. Additional members of the team working with Consultant Chuck Lennox to create the IMP will include **Meredith Zadd, Michelle Baudanza,** Curator of the Conservatory and an additional yet-to-be determined member of the Horticulture department.

NBG Has identified the following third parties for our program:

- Chuck Lennox has been a consultant with Lennox Insites for 21 years, with an extensive history in public programs and interpretation at the King County Department of Natural Resources (1994-2002), with the City of Seattle- Woodland Park Zoo (1990-1994), and as a Park Ranger with the National Park Service (1977-1986). Subcontractor with Lennox Insites, Kari Ross Nelson, will oversee the visitor analysis survey for the IMP. Kari is a Principal at Kari Ross Nelson LLC and has worked with the MOMSI IMLS funded project with Thanksgiving Point and the Utah Division of Arts and Museums.
- Grow digital marketing agency was founded in 2004 in Norfolk, Virginia. Grow is known for industry-leading experiences, platforms, and campaigns for well-known national brands, including Google, lululemon and the Tory Burch Foundation. They have worked with local non-profits, including branding work for the Elizabeth River Trail, a 10-mile waterfront outdoor recreation hub in downtown Norfolk.

Project Resources: The project will take place over two years, with completion built around the introduction of Phase II of Conservatory Connects, a new immersive digital activity in the Perry Conservatory. To complete this goal, NBG will need to hire an Interpretive Technology Specialist to oversee the Conservatory Connect project. This person will guide a team of NBG staff from the marketing, education, and visitor services departments who will use a portion of their salary to create a framework for managing current and creating new digital technology programs, including training new staff and working with a consultant to create an Interpretive Master Plan. A formal evaluation of the technology-based visitor experience in the Perry Conservatory and travel to other gardens using similar formats will add additional data and experiential learning to guide the implementation of the Phase II program.

Tracking Progress: The ITS will organize monthly meetings with the NBG Conservatory Connect team to ensure that all timeline goals are on track and that individual activities are discussed in a collaborative space. Survey results for the Impact Study will be collected through Constant Contact with results calculated on Microsoft Excel. All documents and updates will be shared through Microsoft Teams. Jen Erving, Research & Grants, Special Projects Coordinator, will meet with the NBG Conservatory Connect team every three months to ensure that goals are met in accordance with the Schedule of Completion.

PROJECT RESULTS

Intended Results/Effects on Target Groups: The results of this project will be a streamlined operation for creating new content related and delivering key messages to our Perry Conservatory visitors through digital technology. The staff who are responsible for content building for technology-based interpretation (primarily the leadership of the education, marketing, and horticulture departments) will have increased knowledge about the operation system of Phase 1 *Conservatory Connect* Technology, have a framework for researching and writing digitized content about the collection through the new Interpretive Master Plan, and have data about impact on

visitor usage of *Conservatory Connect* technology. The combination of these three components will lead staff to have the skills and understanding of our audience to lead the creation and implementation of Phase II of Conservatory Connect technology, a SUPERPOWER OF PLANTS game that will immerse visitors even more into our garden biomes.

Resulting Projects: NBG will create measurable outcomes to add to the somewhat limited body of new research on the use of technology in living museum settings. The 2014 publication of The Botanical Gardens International Conservation Education Review magazine, Roots, was dedicated to articles from experts in the field studying the use of electronics. At that time, nature apps were just being introduced, and it was recognized that the formats could "encourage social learning, where people support each other to develop knowledge collectively; it can offer new ways to explore information; it can support inquiry-based learning by helping to organize inquiry and change how learners look at problem-solving; it can help people apply and transfer their learning from one setting to another" (Vergou, 2014). A study at Kew Gardens in London, England during that time found that The Kew app was also "welcomed as a new addition to the Kew experiences a means of "delivering old information through a new medium, and as a new companion that integrated into the mode of their visit" (Mann, 2014). The study found that ease of interface and reliability of the technology were key components to the success. The Conservatory Connect initiative will be especially focused on ensuring that staff can help visitors navigate the technology and troubleshoot technology issues by understanding of how the technology both on the front and back end. As the result of the project, NBG will have a new IMP that will greatly increase interpretive messaging both for technology and across operations, a digital technology staff training guide, meaningful data through the MOMSI study and experience with visitor engagement surveys, and the creation and implementation of Phase II of Conservatory Connects, the SUPERPOWER OF PLANTS.

Sustained Benefits: The completion of the IMP will have a lasting effect on organizational growth related to the future of technology-based visitor engagement. The streamlined plan will benefit each department's future planning and create a cohesive voice for all interpretation and brand-related outputs. This new IMP will address the ever-growing capabilities of AI, but also set appropriate limitations for its use, creating a culture of efficiency with measured evaluation of the information we share with our trusting audience. The Conservatory Connects program will be focused on training staff to build their capabilities regarding digital technology and evaluation and will build these into our established practices. A staff culture centered around the evaluation of programs from a stakeholder perspective will also be a sustained benefit. Through the evaluation of our digital technology, staff at all levels, from the visitor services member who greets the guest to the horticulturist that maintains the collection, will have a broader understanding of the entire experience for the visitor and work to ensure that our strategic goals are met, both through technological innovations and other initiatives. The Conservatory Connects program will help to ensure that the information and stories shared by NBG are cultivated and created by the expertise of the talented staff that work every day to plant and grow our mission in the community.

Vergou, A. "First Word Going Digital." *Roots*, Vol. 11 (1), May 2014, pp. 2-5. This issue of *Roots* (published by the Botanic Gardens Conservation International) was dedicated to using technology in public gardens "Transforming Audience Experience: Botanic Gardens Going Digital.

Mann, C. (2012) A study of the iPhone app at Kew Gardens: Improving the visitor experience. In *Proceedings of the Electronic Visualisation and the Arts conference 10-12 July, 2012*, London, UK. Available at: http://ewic.bcs.org/upload/pdf/ewic_e v12_s1paper2.pdf [Accessed 10 February 2014].

List of Supporting Documents

Supporting Document 1: Lennox Insites Proposed Scope of Work & Estimate
Supporting Document 2: Museum Social Impact Study Toolkit
Supporting Document 3: Grow Experiential Learning Integration Scope of Work
Supporting Document 4: Office Supply Itemized List

Schedule of Completion	2025				2026												2027							
	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
STAFF TRAINING																								
Hire/Onboard Interpretive Technology Specialist (ITS)																								
Create Staff Training Manual for Phase 1 Conservatory Connect																								
Implement Staff Training for Phase I of NBG Conservatory Connect for Current Staff/Volunteers																								
Continued Phase I Training for New Staff & Volunteers																								
EVALUATION STUDY																								
Select Evaluation Participants																								
Study Participants Visit #1/ Visitor Evaluation #1																								
Data Analysis of Visitor Evaluation #1 & Recommend Updates to Phase 1 NBG Conservatory Connects Technology																								
Data Analysis of Visitor Evaluation #2 & Measure of Impact of Changes to Technology Content after Evaluation #1																								
Data Analysis of Guest Evaluation #3 & Recommend updates for new Superpower of Plants technology																								
INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN																								
Background Research, Community Interviews, 1st planning meeting- virtual																								
Second Planning Workshop (Site Visit: 3 days) — Site Orientation + Assessment + Goals and Objectives																								
Third Planning Workshop (Virtual) Confirm Themes, Challenges/Opportunities																								
Fourth Planning Workshop (Site Visit: 3 days) — Future Planning, Confirm Plan Direction																								
RESEARCH TRAVEL TO OTHER GARDENS																								
Museums Visit 1- Chicago																								
Museums Visit 2- NYC																								
APGA Conference																								

PHASE 2- NEW TECHNOLOGY CREATION- The Superpower of Plants																								
	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
First Conservatory Connect Meeting with Grow for Planning of Phase II- The "Superpower of Plants" Activity																								
Second Conservatory Connect Team Meeting with Grow to Test "Superpower of Plants" Activity																								
Staff Training Plan Created by the ITS for "Superpower of Plants" Activity																								
Staff Training for Phase II of NBG Conservatory Connect for current staff/volunteers																								
Superpower of Plants Activity Introduced in the Perry Conservatory																								