



Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Sample Application MH-260722-OMS-26
Project Type: Large Project (\$100,001-\$500,000)

Anderson Center for the Arts

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$192,750
Amount of cost share:	\$204,805

The Anderson Center for the Arts will strengthen their curatorial, interpretive, and programmatic infrastructure to expand their engagement with the surrounding community. Project activities include artist residencies, community engagement, and public exhibitions to expand access to cultural heritage programming. Participating artists and cultural workers will gain access to professional development opportunities, exhibition platforms, and community engagement experiences that support the creation and presentation of new work while strengthening their role as stewards of cultural memory. The project will generate a residency framework that integrates artist research, community storytelling, and public interpretation through exhibitions, performances, and film programming. Key tools produced through the project include documentation of the residency model, interpretive materials developed for exhibitions and performances, and curated digital content capturing artist talks, performances, and community dialogues. The outcome of these activities will be increased professional capacity for participating artists through mentorship, exhibition opportunities, and community engagement experiences.

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.

NARRATIVE

The Anderson Center for the Arts will align the proposed project to the following program goal and associated objective:

Goal 1: Build the capacity of Black museums and their ability to serve their communities.

Objective 1.1: Develop, enhance, or expand public programs, exhibitions, and/or school programs.

Project Justification: What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?

Access to cultural heritage institutions plays an essential role in preserving and interpreting the histories and artistic traditions that shape American communities. While the City of Houston within Harris County offers numerous opportunities for arts engagement and cultural programming related to Black history and culture, these opportunities are not evenly distributed throughout the county. The need for expanded cultural heritage programming in Unincorporated East Harris County (UEHC) was identified through a review of the community's cultural infrastructure and demographic data. This review confirmed that no museums, galleries, or cultural heritage institutions currently operate within the UEHC service area outside of The Anderson Center for the Arts, including institutions dedicated to the Black diaspora. As a result, residents have limited access to local platforms for exhibitions, interpretation, and cultural programming that preserve and present Black history and culture.

Harris County encompasses approximately 1,778 square miles, and residents of the eastern unincorporated communities often face transportation, economic, and geographic barriers that limit their ability to access arts and cultural programming located more than 20 miles away in central Houston. As part of the community assessment used to identify local cultural infrastructure needs, publicly available demographic and economic data were also reviewed. The communities listed in Table 1 are designated Target Communities by the Harris County Economic Equity and Opportunity Department. Target Communities are identified as underserved and under-resourced areas experiencing elevated levels of poverty and unemployment and demonstrating a greater need for programs and services that support improved quality of life. (The county map is included as Supporting Document 1 in the Other Attachments section of the grant portal.)

Despite these barriers, community demand for cultural engagement remains strong. Local households spend an estimated \$2,000 annually on leisure and cultural activities. However, because of the absence of cultural venues within Unincorporated East Harris County, much of this spending occurs outside the community. Estimates indicate that more than \$80 million in leisure spending leaves the UEHC area each year as residents travel elsewhere to attend exhibitions, performances, and cultural events. This pattern highlights both the community's interest in arts and culture and the absence of local institutions able to meet that demand. Expanding opportunities for cultural exhibitions and storytelling within the community is therefore critical to ensuring that residents have access to cultural experiences that reflect their own histories and lived experiences.

Further, "In every culture and every religion, stories have played critical roles in constituting meaning, constructing identity, and prescribing behavior" (Godsil & Goodale, *Telling Our Own Story: The Role of Narrative in Racial Healing*, 2013). Contemporary research continues to affirm the importance of cultural storytelling in shaping collective understanding. Studies from UNESCO note that cultural expression and heritage institutions play a central role in preserving collective memory and strengthening cultural continuity within societies (UNESCO, *Re-Shaping Policies for Creativity*, 2021). Similarly, research from Pew Research Center highlights how representation within cultural storytelling and public narratives influences how communities and their histories are understood by broader audiences (Pew Research Center, 2023). However, throughout history the development and dissemination of public narratives have often been shaped by the institutions and individuals with access to cultural platforms. Increasing opportunities for diverse communities to share, document, and interpret their histories helps ensure that the broader American story reflects the full range of cultural experiences that have shaped the nation.

While stories are powerful tools for preserving history and culture, understanding lived experiences, bearing witness to the past, and shaping collective identity, the ability to share those stories publicly has not always been equally

accessible. Throughout history, cultural narratives have often been shaped by the institutions and individuals with the resources and platforms necessary to bring stories before the public. As a result, many communities have had limited opportunities to present their histories, traditions, and lived experiences through the visual and performing arts.

This dynamic has had particular implications for Black communities in the United States. For generations, stories about Black life, culture, and history were frequently interpreted or presented through institutions that did not fully reflect the perspectives of the communities being represented. Because storytelling—whether expressed through visual art, theater, film, or music—plays a powerful role in shaping public understanding, limited access to cultural platforms contributed to incomplete or distorted portrayals of Black life and experience. These portrayals have often influenced broader perceptions of Black communities and, at times, diminished the dignity and humanity embedded within their stories.

In the contemporary arts landscape, disparities in access to resources and cultural platforms continue to affect the ability of many Black cultural workers and cultural bearers to bring their work before the public. Cultural workers—including visual artists, filmmakers, playwrights, and multidisciplinary creators—serve as stewards of cultural memory. They hold, interpret, and carry forward narratives that reflect the lived experiences, traditions, and creative contributions of their communities while also generating new artistic responses that expand the historical record. However, gaps in funding, exhibition opportunities, and institutional support within the visual and performing arts fields can make it difficult for cultural workers to produce new work or ensure that existing works are preserved and interpreted for future generations.

Moreover, institutions whose missions center on preserving and interpreting Black history and culture serve as critical cultural heritage infrastructure—providing the primary platforms through which Black cultural narratives are documented, preserved, interpreted, and shared with the public. Community-based museums, cultural centers, and heritage organizations play an essential role in ensuring that these histories remain visible and accessible. However, many of these organizations face systemic structural barriers that make it difficult to sustain and expand their work. Many operate with smaller budgets, limited endowments, and fewer long-term funding streams than larger cultural institutions. As a result, they often must devote significant time and resources to securing operational support, leaving fewer resources available for the documentation, preservation, and interpretation of cultural materials.

These constraints can also affect institutional infrastructure. Black-led cultural organizations frequently operate with smaller staffs, limited archival resources, and fewer opportunities to invest in long-term preservation tools such as digital archiving systems, collections management practices, and professional development for cultural workers. Without sustained institutional capacity, the responsibility of preserving important cultural narratives often falls to individual cultural workers rather than being supported by durable organizational systems designed to safeguard cultural heritage over time.

While these challenges exist nationally, they are particularly visible in communities with limited cultural infrastructure. In Unincorporated East Harris County, the absence of museums, galleries, and other cultural institutions significantly limits residents' opportunities to access and engage with cultural heritage locally. Without nearby platforms for exhibitions, interpretation, and cultural programming, residents have few opportunities to encounter artifacts, narratives, and artistic works that reflect the historical and contemporary contributions of Black communities to American life.

Meeting these cultural heritage needs requires not only expanded opportunities for artists and cultural workers to develop and share their work, but also strong institutions capable of preserving, interpreting, and presenting those narratives to the public. In communities where cultural infrastructure is limited, institutions like The Anderson Center for the Arts serve as critical platforms for ensuring that local histories, artistic traditions, and cultural narratives remain visible and accessible to the public. Strengthening the institutional capacity of community-based cultural organizations is

therefore essential to ensuring that Black cultural narratives are not only created but also preserved, interpreted, and made accessible to the public.

To address these challenges, The Anderson Center for the Arts seeks \$192,750.00 in funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to implement the A.I.R. Residency for Cultural Memory (Amplify, Illuminate, Restore). The project will strengthen the institutional capacity of The Anderson Center as a Black cultural heritage institution while expanding its ability to serve the surrounding community. Through the residency, cultural workers will research, develop, and present new work interpreting Black history and culture through public exhibitions, interpretive programming, and educational engagement activities. The project will also strengthen the Center's curatorial, interpretive, and programmatic infrastructure by creating structured opportunities for cultural workers to produce and present new work while engaging the public in dialogue around cultural memory and storytelling. By expanding the Center's exhibitions and public programming, the project will increase community access to culturally relevant cultural heritage experiences while strengthening the organization's long-term capacity to preserve and interpret Black cultural narratives. In doing so, the project will help establish a sustainable framework through which the histories, artistic traditions, and lived experiences of Black communities in Unincorporated East Harris County can be documented, interpreted, and shared with future generations.

Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning?

The primary audience for this project consists of residents of Unincorporated East Harris County (UEHC), including the communities of North Shore, Channelview, Crosby, Sheldon, and the historic settlement of Barrett Station, representing a combined population of approximately 83,000 residents. The service area reflects the diverse cultural landscape of eastern Harris County, with approximately 50% of residents identifying as Hispanic, 37% as Black, and 13% as White or other racial groups. Several communities within the service area also have historically significant Black populations. For example, Barrett Station—one of the oldest historically Black settlements in Harris County—remains a predominantly Black community, with approximately 59% of residents identifying as Black.

Despite its cultural diversity and population size, UEHC remains one of the most underserved regions in Greater Houston in terms of access to arts and cultural institutions. Many residents fall within the ALICE population—Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed—meaning they are working households that earn above the federal poverty level but still struggle to afford basic household necessities. These economic pressures, combined with the geographic isolation of many UEHC neighborhoods, create significant barriers to accessing cultural resources located in Houston's museum district more than twenty miles away. While the City of Houston is home to approximately 150 museums, residents of UEHC have few opportunities to engage with exhibitions, storytelling, and arts programming within their own community, making the region a literal arts and cultural desert. The A.I.R. Residency for Cultural Memory will primarily serve these residents by expanding access to exhibitions, interpretive programming, and public engagement activities that bring Black cultural narratives to life within the community.

Community Involvement in Planning

Residents of Unincorporated East Harris County have played an active role in shaping the development of this project through a variety of engagement and planning activities facilitated by The Anderson Center for the Arts. Community members have participated in focus groups, community charrettes, and planning discussions related to arts programming and neighborhood revitalization initiatives. Residents have also demonstrated strong support for expanding cultural programming in the area by writing letters of support for funding requests, providing public testimony to local officials advocating for the Center's work, and serving as community ambassadors who help disseminate information about programs and initiatives throughout the community. In addition, ongoing conversations with participants at exhibitions, performances, and public programs have provided valuable feedback that has helped inform the structure and priorities of the A.I.R. Residency for Cultural Memory. Together, these forms of engagement reflect sustained community interest in increasing access to culturally relevant programming and ensuring that local institutions have the capacity to preserve and share the stories, histories, and creative contributions of the communities they serve.

Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?

The primary beneficiaries of this project include both community residents and cultural workers. The most immediate beneficiaries are the approximately 83,000 residents of Unincorporated East Harris County, particularly those living in communities experiencing elevated poverty rates and limited access to cultural institutions and arts programming. By expanding locally accessible exhibitions, interpretive programming, and public storytelling initiatives, the project will increase opportunities for residents to engage with cultural experiences that reflect the histories, traditions, and creative contributions of Black communities. These opportunities are especially important in UEHC, where the absence of museums, bookstores, and other cultural venues limits residents' access to arts and cultural resources that are readily available in other parts of the Houston region.

The project will also benefit cultural workers participating in the A.I.R. Residency for Cultural Memory, including visual artists, filmmakers, playwrights, and multidisciplinary creators whose work interprets Black history and culture. Through the residency, participating cultural workers will gain access to professional development opportunities, exhibition platforms, and community engagement experiences that support the creation and presentation of new work while strengthening their role as stewards of cultural memory.

Over the long term, the project will contribute to strengthening the cultural infrastructure of Unincorporated East Harris County by supporting both the community audiences who engage with cultural programming and the cultural workers whose creative practice preserves and interprets cultural heritage for future generations. By expanding the capacity of a community-based cultural institution to document, interpret, and present Black cultural narratives, the project will help ensure that these stories remain visible and accessible within the communities from which they emerge.

People in Greater Houston who want to learn more about Black history and culture, more deeply understand the collective lived experience of Black people, and who are interested in or seek opportunities to engage in discourse about topics of race in a productive way will also benefit.

Project Work Plan: What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?

The A.I.R. Residency for Cultural Memory will be implemented through a structured sequence of activities designed to support resident cultural workers in researching, developing, and presenting new artistic interpretations of Black cultural history and cultural memory. The project integrates artist residencies, community engagement, and public exhibitions to expand access to cultural heritage programming while strengthening the institutional capacity of The Anderson Center for the Arts as a Black cultural institution.

The project will unfold in six phases over a twenty-month period, with quarterly progress monitoring conducted to ensure that activities remain aligned with the project's stated goals and measurable objectives.

SEQUENCE:

Time Frame	Key Activities
Sept – Nov 2026 (Phase 1)	Project preparation; confirm partners; finalize schedule; contract curators/service providers; release open call; begin quarterly progress monitoring.
Oct – Dec 2026 (Phase 2)	Recruit and select resident cultural workers; convene review panel; residency orientation; initiate outreach and marketing; monitor recruitment progress.
Dec 2026 – Apr 2027 (Phase 3)	Residency research and creative development; artists refine interpretive themes with staff and community input; mentorship and peer exchange; progress monitoring.
Feb – May 2027 (Phase 4)	Community engagement and work-in-progress presentations; artist talks, open studios, and dialogue events; gather community stories and feedback.

Jun – Dec 2027 (Phase 5)	Public Cultural Memory Exhibition Series: ApolloHTX, Motown: When Soul Told the Story, and Cultural Memory Film Festival; digital storytelling and audience engagement.
Jan – Apr 2028 (Phase 6)	Documentation, evaluation, and cultural preservation; archive performances and artist interviews; analyze participation data; prepare final report.

What are the risks to the project and how will you mitigate them? –

This project has minimal risk. The space needed to host the residency and present the exhibitions and programs is already present; the community has already addressed very strong interest in the project, increasing the likelihood of its success. A possible risk is the loss of key personnel, many who possess institutional knowledge that is instrumental to the success of the center; however, there are policies and procedures which drive day to day operations, desk references to help avoid loss of institutional knowledge, and a secession plan for key staff. A final risk that affects everyone is the potential for a government shutdown which might impact funding. In that instance, we will revise the project scope to align to available funding.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

The project will be managed by Anderson's Artistic Director, Allison Retina Stewart Creeks. Allison will dedicate 35% of her time to the project. Allison reports to the Executive Director, Michelle L. Bonton, who will dedicate 15% of her time to the project as the Project Director. The Project Director will liaise with IMLS, negotiate contracts, conduct progress monitoring and compliance. The Artistic Director, as Project Manager will liaise with all project partners/collaborators. The extensive experience of the Project Director in federal programs and grants management, budgeting, and compliance and that of the Project Manager in the creative industry as a visual artist, writer, teacher, speaker, and program director will strengthen the project implementation. The resident cultural workers will create the work products related to the project, contract curators and service providers, and select community members will help plan and implement the project.

What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?

The total IMLS financial resources required to carry out the project activities are \$190,152.49, which will support personnel, artist stipends, exhibition production, and project implementation costs. Personnel costs include salary and fringe benefits for the Project Director and the Project Manager. Resident cultural worker stipends of \$75,000 (\$15,000 each) to support the development of new works for the Cultural Memory series. These stipends ensure that participating cultural workers have the resources necessary to research, develop, and present new work as part of the Cultural Memory exhibition series.

Additional project costs include contracted services, purchase of film screening rights, modular gallery walls, touring audio systems, and travel to attend the required meeting convened by the Institute of Museum and Library Services over the course of the project period. Plus, supplies and materials required to support residency activities, exhibition production, and documentation of artistic works. Funds are also allocated for contractors and professional services, including curatorial support, production staff, exhibition technicians, marketing and communications services, digital documentation, graphic design, and marketing to support community engagement. These contractors will assist with exhibition development, residency coordination, and presentation of the public Cultural Memory exhibition series.

Other resources. The Anderson Center for the Arts will provide the physical and institutional infrastructure necessary to support the project. The Center's facilities include gallery and performance space suitable for exhibitions, performances, and community programming associated with the Cultural Memory exhibition series. The organization will also provide administrative support, marketing infrastructure, and technical equipment required for exhibitions, performances, and digital documentation of the artistic works developed through the residency.

Personnel resources needed to carry out the project include the **Project Director**, who will provide strategic leadership and oversight of the residency and exhibition series, ensuring that the project remains aligned with the institutional

mission of The Anderson Center for the Arts. The **Program Manager** will coordinate residency activities, manage artist communications, oversee community engagement events, and support the production of the exhibition series.

Additional personnel resources include contracted **curators and artistic advisors**, who will support the interpretive development of the exhibition series, as well as technical production staff responsible for staging performances, film presentations, and multimedia components associated with the exhibitions. Resident cultural workers themselves are also central contributors to the project, collaborating with Anderson Center staff to develop and present new artistic works interpreting Black cultural memory.

The Anderson Center for the Arts will provide the primary venue for residency activities, exhibitions, and public engagement events. The Center's facilities include gallery space, performance space, and meeting areas that are well suited for exhibitions, performances, and community programming. These facilities provide sufficient space to host the Cultural Memory exhibition series and accommodate community audiences.

How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results? –

Progress toward successful implementation of the project will be monitored through quarterly reviews of program activities, including residency participation, exhibition production milestones, audience engagement, and budget expenditures. These reviews will ensure that project resources are used effectively and that project activities remain aligned with the intended goals and outcomes of the residency.

The components of the evaluation plan include data from artists' and actors performance indicators (e.g., number of interactions with the public; quality of the end product; impact of the community interactions; surveys, participation records, value of productions), data from community perspectives (e.g., visits to the museum; community surveys; community engagement), and programmatic indicators (e.g., how well the project is being implemented and meeting objectives on time and within budget). Data will be collected, analyzed, and reported by comparing baseline data for the program to determine growth within the project.

Through data collection procedures, interviews, pre- and post-surveys, and reviews of project records, appropriate feedback will be provided on the quality or effectiveness of all major activities and strategies to program administrators quarterly to facilitate appropriate project implementation improvements. The program administrators will meet to discuss findings. On-going evaluative feedback will be provided regarding implementation elements so that timely on-going programmatic modifications can be made throughout the duration of the project's implementation and documented in the final report. Results of the formative and summative evaluations will be used to define program goals and objectives and to determine the overall effectiveness of the project. HCCAC will acknowledge and reference IMLS support in all grant products, publications, websites, and presentations developed with IMLS funding using the associated grant award number.

What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need you have identified?

Intended results are increase in the following: Programs and exhibitions, community engagement, capacity to serve our constituents, public access to museum collections, positive community discourse, and increased museum collections.

Quantitative outcomes are as follow:

- a) Face to Face Community Engagement will increase by 25%
- b) Online Community Engagement will increase by 20% -
- c) At least 40% of participants will identify as being residents of Unincorporated East Harris County
- d) At least 75% of participating artists will report increased professional capacity through mentorship, exhibition opportunities, and community engagement experiences.
- e) 70% of audience members surveyed will report increased awareness of Black cultural history and storytelling traditions after participating in project events.

How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the target group change?

The project will strengthen participants' knowledge, perspectives, and cultural understanding by providing opportunities to engage directly with Black narratives as interpreted and presented by Black artists and cultural workers.

Engaging with these narratives will also influence attitudes and perceptions. Research suggests that storytelling and cultural interpretation presented from within a community can foster empathy, reduce bias, and increase cross-cultural understanding (Sturkey, 2021; Kelly, 2012). By encountering stories told by those who have lived or inherited these experiences, participants will be encouraged to reconsider stereotypes, challenge long-standing misconceptions, and develop a more nuanced understanding of Black identity and cultural expression.

For Black participants in particular, seeing their histories and lived experiences reflected in museum-quality programming can strengthen cultural pride and reinforce a sense of belonging within cultural institutions.

Models, tools, and research findings

The A.I.R. Residency for Cultural Memory will produce a replicable community-based cultural preservation model demonstrating how small and mid-sized cultural institutions can support artists as interpreters of local history and cultural memory. The project will generate a residency framework that integrates artist research, community storytelling, and public interpretation through exhibitions, performances, and film programming.

Key tools produced through the project will include documentation of the residency model, interpretive materials developed for exhibitions and performances, and curated digital content capturing artist talks, performances, and community dialogues. These resources will provide practical guidance for artists, educators, and cultural institutions interested in using the arts to interpret and share cultural heritage.

To ensure accessibility, project outputs will be shared through public exhibitions, performances, and film screenings, as well as digital documentation made available through The Anderson Center for the Arts' website and online platforms. These materials will extend the project's reach beyond the immediate community and contribute to broader field learning on artist-led interpretation of African American cultural heritage.

How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance?

The benefits of the A.I.R. Residency for Cultural Memory will be sustained through a combination of institutional capacity building, continued programming, and preservation of the cultural materials generated through the project.

First, the project will strengthen the Anderson Center's ability to implement future artist residencies and cultural heritage exhibitions by establishing a **structured residency framework that can be replicated in future programming cycles**. The experience gained through this project will inform ongoing residency initiatives that continue to support cultural workers interpreting Black history and cultural memory.

Second, the **digital documentation and archival materials created through the project will remain accessible beyond the grant period**, allowing the Anderson Center to preserve the artistic works and cultural narratives developed by resident cultural workers. These materials will support future exhibitions, educational programming, and community engagement activities.

Finally, the project will expand the Anderson Center's network of **artists, cultural workers, community partners, and audiences**, creating a foundation for continued collaboration and cultural programming. By strengthening these relationships and expanding public awareness of the Center's cultural heritage work, the project will help ensure that the benefits of the residency extend beyond the grant period and contribute to the long-term preservation and interpretation of Black cultural narratives.

YEAR ONE TIMELINE: September 1, 2026 – August 31, 2027

Activity	Sep 2026	Oct 2026	Nov 2026	Dec 2026	Jan 2027	Feb 2027	Mar 2027	Apr 2027	May 2027	June 2027	July 2027	Aug 2027
Phase 1: Grant Announced, Project Team Convened, Confirm partners; finalize schedule; Negotiate contracts with curators/service providers; Release open call; Begin quarterly progress monitoring.												
Phase 2: Convene Review Panel, Select resident cultural workers; Hold residency orientation; initiate engagement, outreach and marketing. All project contracts finalized and signed												
Phase 3: Creative development; artists refine interpretive themes with staff and community input; mentorship and peer exchange; progress monitoring. Purchase supplies and materials.												
Phase 4: Community engagement and work-in-progress presentations; artist talks, open studios, and dialogue events; gather community stories and feedback. Conduct progress monitoring. Surveys Administered, Anecdotal feedback collected, data reviewed												
Phase 5: Public Cultural Memory Exhibition Series- ApolloHTX, and Cultural Memory Film Festival; digital storytelling and audience engagement. Surveys Administered, Anecdotal feedback collected, data reviewed												

YEAR TWO TIMELINE: September 1, 2027 – April, 2028

Activity	Sep 2027	Oct 2027	Nov 2027	Dec 2027	Jan 2028	Feb 2028	Mar 2028	Apr 2028	May 2028	June 2028	July 2028	Aug 2028
Phase 5 (CONT'D) Public Cultural Memory Exhibition Series: digital storytelling and audience engagement, Motown: When Soul Told the Story. Surveys Administered, Anecdotal feedback collected, data reviewed												
Phase 6: Documentation, evaluation, and cultural preservation; archive performances and artist interviews; analyze participation data; prepare final report.												