Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services

Sample Application MN-258418-OMS-25

Penobscot Indian Nation
Cultural and Historic Preservation Department

Amount awarded by IMLS:	$249,925
Amount of cost share:	$0

The Penobscot Nation Museum is moving to a newly built location and will undergo a transformative exhibition design process with a professional museum design and fabrication firm in order to integrate interactive content and advanced technology into the new exhibits and space. Project funds will support script writing, translation, transcription, and language integration; audiovisual recording and equipment; graphic design and production; digital infrastructure development; and essential technology investments such as sound systems, lighting, touchscreens, and other interactives for the new exhibits. These updates will allow the museum to share more of its extensive collection in innovative and impactful ways, enhancing visitor engagement and supporting the endangered Penobscot language, while reinforcing the museum's role as a hub for Penobscot cultural knowledge.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Digital Products Plan

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.

Penobscot Nation – Digital Museum Enhancement Project

Narrative

Project Justification

Which program objective(s) of the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program will your project address?

Objective 1: Support the preservation and perpetuation of Indigenous languages and cultural practices.

How will your project strengthen your Tribe's museum services? The Penobscot Nation Museum is moving into a newly built location. A significant component of this move is the opportunity to integrate interactive content and advanced technology into the new exhibits and space. To enhance visitor engagement, accessibility, and preservation of Penobscot culture the museum will design new exhibits with a professional museum design and fabrication firm.

The Penobscot Nation Museum collections include five historic birchbark canoes, hundreds of black ash and sweetgrass baskets, carved root clubs, snowshoes, beadwork, archival photography, and thousands of archeological artifacts. Community visioning sessions are informing overall exhibit planning and revealing the big picture stories the community and stakeholders want to share.

This request seeks funding to support essential technology design and investments, including AV equipment, sound systems, lighting, touchscreens, and database infrastructure, enabling the museum to share its extensive collection in innovative and impactful exhibits. New digital exhibits will be integrated into, and enhance traditional museum exhibits being designed for the new space.

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

The museum's physical space limitations prevent us from displaying the full breadth of our collection and sharing the depth of Penobscot's cultural heritage. Technology will effectively solve these constraints, allowing for a more immersive and comprehensive experience beyond traditional display methods. The Penobscot Nation Museum collection has been digitized with the support of a previous IMLS Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Grant. Penobscot language was digitized with an Administration for Native Americans (ANA) grant. By building on this earlier work, we hope to leverage the images, language content, and archives into exhibits that will make a significant cultural impact.

Who is the primary audience for your project and how have they been involved in the planning? "Primary audience" refers to those who will be most immediately and positively affected by your project. Identify the number of individuals in the target group or in each primary audience, if you identify more than one.

The primary audiences for this project are Penobscot Nation tribal members and visitors to the museum. There are approximately 541 residents of Indian Island, with approximately 1400 tribal members living within the state of Maine. The new location of the museum is located next to the Indian Island School and is walking distance to elderly housing, day care, youth program, and tribal administration offices. We expect increased visitation and opportunities for collaborative programing across tribal departments.

New exhibits incorporating technology creates a unique opportunity to ensure the longevity of the endangered Penobscot language and knowledge within the community. Through these digital resources, we can encourage intergenerational learning and participation among a wide age range, benefiting Native and non-Native audiences.

In the past the museum has drawn visitors from Maine, New England, and across the United States and Canada. International visitors from France, Germany, Finland, England, and China are not unusual. The museum serves as a resource for the University of Maine and other colleges in the area, and elementary and high school group visits in the spring and fall.

Who are the ultimate beneficiaries of this project? "Beneficiaries" refers to those who are likely to be aided in the long-term by your project. They may or may not be the same as your "primary audience."

Beneficiaries of this project include current and future members of the Penobscot Nation. For our own community Penobscot Nation Museum holds and shares stories of the ancestors, reflects the beauty and strength of those who kept our traditions safe for us, and serves as a resource for those who would carry those traditions forward for future generations.

For our own people to see historic photographs of family, to be able to hold something made by an ancestor, or to just be inspired by carvings, baskets, and objects is healing for many who struggle with this world. To be reminded of the determination, resourcefulness, creativity, and beauty of our culture helps not just our own people, but also brings deeper understanding and respect that is so needed between cultures.

Project Work Plan

What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?

Project Kick-off - July 2025

- Tour exhibit space or relevant locations.
- Review current plans, collections catalog, and objectives.
- Define main message and exhibit priorities.
- Brainstorm interactive and AV elements.
- Review budget and timeline.
- Project Brief summarizing initial understanding.

Schematic Design I - July – September 2025

- Exhibit Plan, including:
  - Project overview, design approach, and initial color palette.
  - Preliminary floor plan and major exhibit sketches.
  - Proposed interactives and AV descriptions.
  - Cost proposal for high-level budget analysis.
- Complete Feedback Form with consensus direction from stakeholders.

Schematic Design II – October - December 2025

- Design Book and Content Manual, including:
  - Updated scaled floor plans and key component drawings.
  - Refined color and graphic approach.
  - Preliminary graphic hierarchy and exhibit content updates.
  - Cost proposal with budget by exhibit area.
- Complete Feedback Form for direction on design refinements from stakeholders.

Design Development I - January – March 2026

- Updated Design Book and Content Manual, including:
  - Detailed floor plans, color choices, and exhibit materials.
  - Preliminary interactive and AV treatments.
  - Draft text and sample graphics for interpretive content.

    - Preliminary image matrix and artifact list.
    - Cost proposal with detailed line items for each exhibit component.
- Review and provide consensus direction through Feedback Form.

Design Development II - February – April 2026
- Finalized Design Book and Content Manual, including:
    - Final floor plans, materials, finishes, and graphic approach.
    - Completed exhibit and AV element treatments.
    - Final text, images, and artifact list.
    - Detailed cost proposal and preliminary General Contractor (GC) package.
- Approve designs and provide Feedback Form consensus.

Pre-Production – May – June 2026
- Production Preparation, including:
    - Production schedule, graphic layouts, and AV storyboard approvals.
    - Final graphic proofs and content error inspection.
    - Construction drawings with technical specs for all exhibit structures.
    - AV technical drawings and specialty item development.
    - Coordination of any building modifications with client, architect, and GC.
- Review and approve final production materials, layouts, and AV plans.

Production / Fabrication - July – September 2026
    - Fabricate all exhibit components and produce AV programs.
    - Procure and install AV hardware, conduct system testing.
    - Provide regular progress updates and photos.
    - Host site visits and oversee subcontractor work as needed.
    - Continue coordination with architect and GC for building modifications.

Installation - October – December 2026
    - Coordinate delivery and on-site installation logistics.
    - Set up staging area and install large structures, AV equipment, interactive elements.
    - Complete on-site finishing, lighting, and cleanup.
    - Conduct walk-through inspection and address any punch-list items.
    - Train staff on exhibit operation and maintenance.

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

Incorporating advanced technology faces a few potential risks, but we have strategies to manage them effectively. Technical issues with AV and interactive systems could disrupt visitor engagement, so we'll partner with the Tribe for technology support and SJ Rollins for quick troubleshooting. To make the experience accessible to all visitors, we'll follow Universal Design principles and test technology with diverse user groups. Finally, for long-term sustainability, we'll set up regular maintenance, create a maintenance budget, and train staff on upkeep. These measures will help us deliver a respectful, inclusive, and durable exhibit that serves the community and visitors alike.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

This project will be planned, implemented, and managed by Jennifer Neptune, the Museum Director and a dedicated Penobscot artist, writer, and educator. She will work with Project Management Consultant Erin Hutton to ensure the project timeline and budget stay on track throughout the project. Split Rock Studios will work closely with Jennifer and Erin to meet project objectives and deadlines.

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

Time: The project timeline is expected to span 18-24 months, starting with a kick-off meeting in January 2025 and proceeding through phases of schematic design, development, production, and installation. Time will also be allocated for staff training on exhibit operation and maintenance, as well as ongoing technical support.

Financial Resources: Funding will be essential to cover costs related to design, materials, interactive technology, AV equipment, integration, and fabrication. The budget will also include contingencies for any unforeseen expenses. Federal grants and private funding will be sought to support these areas, ensuring the project meets quality and sustainability goals.

Technology and AV Equipment

- Touchscreen Displays and Interactive Systems: $51,000
- Audio-Visual Equipment (speakers, projectors, microphones, etc.): $35,000
- Script writing, recording, hardware, and integration (for visually and hearing impaired): $22,250
- Database Infrastructure and Digital Archive Development: $27,000
- Technical Support (initial installation, setup, and ongoing maintenance): $22,500

Content Development and Multimedia Production:

- Video and Audio Recording (cultural interviews, language content): $22,000
- Graphic Design and Production: $27,000
- Translation, Transcription, and Language Integration: $15,000

Subtotal: $221,750

- Contingency Fund (for unforeseen costs and overruns): 10% of total project cost: $22,175

Project Budget Total: $243,925
IMLS Meetings Travel: $6,000

Total Interactive and Technology Budget: $249,925

Personnel: The project will be managed by Jennifer Neptune, who will oversee design, cultural accuracy, and overall project coordination. Museum collaboration will come from Erin Hutton Projects, with exhibition fabrication led by Minnesota-based Split Rock Studios. SJ Rollins will provide technical support to ensure the reliable setup and maintenance of all AV and interactive components. Museum staff and trained volunteers will also assist with archiving and cataloging, reviewing cultural content, and supporting installation and training. Penobscot cultural advisors will further ensure the authenticity and community relevance of the project's content and design.

Technical Resources: We will require high-quality AV equipment, touchscreens, sound systems, and reliable database infrastructure to support interactive displays and ongoing support to ensure long-term functionality and accessibility for all visitors.

Community and Cultural Resources: Collaboration with Penobscot cultural advisors, language speakers, and community members will be critical to ensure the cultural accuracy and resonance of the exhibit. Advisors will assist with content creation and language integration and provide feedback on exhibit elements to maintain authenticity.

How will you track progress toward achieving your intended results?
We will hold monthly internal meetings, as well as regular with contractors/consultants to ensure the project stays on track to achieve our intended results. If we begin to veer off track, we will increase the number of meetings to twice a month, or to weekly for periods of time necessary to maintain our timeline to achieve intended results.

Project Results

What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified?
The intended results of the Penobscot Nation Museum Digital Enhancement Project are twofold: first, to significantly enhance knowledge and understanding of Penobscot culture and heritage, and second, to establish a sustainable, technology-driven exhibits that offer lasting societal benefits. By incorporating advanced technology—such as AV systems, interactive touchscreens, and a comprehensive digital database—our project will address the current challenges of limited exhibit space and inaccessible elements of our collection while making the museum's resources available to a broader audience.

From the perspective of advancing knowledge and understanding, this project will deepen engagement with Penobscot heritage. Technology will allow us to present multimedia content beyond traditional displays, offering visitors an immersive experience with the museum's collection. For instance, interactive touchscreens will give users access to audio, video, and images of artifacts, accompanied by contextual information in the Penobscot language. We are also including script writing, recording, hardware, and integration for the visually and hearing impaired. This approach preserves language and fosters a richer connection to cultural narratives, tools, and traditional practices. By making endangered language and cultural knowledge digitally accessible to all, the project is a valuable resource for community members and researchers, enabling more profound learning and long-term preservation.

The federal investment in this project will generate societal benefits by making the museum's resources accessible to diverse audiences, regardless of geographic location. The digitized collection and multimedia content, accessible through museum visits, will reach Native and non-Native communities, facilitating cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. This outreach has the potential to inspire greater inclusivity and understanding within and beyond Maine, showcasing the resilience and richness of Penobscot culture.

By addressing both the need for knowledge preservation and the practical limitations of physical space, this project will ensure that the Penobscot Nation Museum remains a vital cultural heritage repository for future generations.

How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the primary audience change because of your project?
As a result of the Penobscot Nation Museum Digital Museum Enhancement project, we anticipate transformative changes in the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes of our target groups, which include Penobscot community members, museum visitors, educators, and researchers.

1. **Knowledge**: By incorporating interactive technology, the project will enhance access to the museum's cultural and historical content, allowing visitors to explore detailed aspects of Penobscot heritage that may not have been accessible before. Through touchscreens, audiovisuals, and digital archives, visitors will gain a deeper understanding of Penobscot language, stories, and traditions, and community members will have a robust resource for connecting with ancestral knowledge.

2. **Skills**: The project will equip Penobscot community members and staff with valuable skills in technology use, digital archiving, and cultural storytelling. As the museum integrates multimedia elements and an accessible

database, staff will develop expertise in operating and maintaining these tools, enhancing their ability to curate and share digital content. Community members will also gain new research skills as they interact with the museum's digital resources, learning how to navigate archives and access cultural materials that support intergenerational learning.

3. **Behaviors**: With a more immersive and interactive museum experience, we expect increased engagement and visitation, especially among young people. The project will encourage regular interaction with Penobscot heritage, promoting curiosity, exploration, and pride in cultural identity. This shift in behavior will also support knowledge transmission within the community, as younger generations are more likely to interact with, learn from, and contribute to the digital archive, fostering a community-centered approach to cultural preservation.

4. **Attitudes**: By creating a dynamic, technology-enhanced space, we aim to foster a sense of pride, ownership, and stewardship of Penobscot heritage among community members. This approach respects and revitalizes Penobscot language and culture, demonstrating its value in a modern context and reinforcing the importance of knowledge preservation. Non-Native visitors will also gain a greater appreciation for Penobscot culture and history, cultivating attitudes of respect and empathy. The project will foster greater inclusivity and understanding within and beyond the museum, highlighting the cultural resilience and contributions of the Penobscot Nation.

What products will result from your project, and how will you make them accessible to the primary audience?

The Penobscot Nation Museum Digital Museum Enhancement project will yield several key products designed to enhance visitor engagement, educational outreach, and cultural preservation:

1. **Interactive Touchscreen Database**: A central product of this project will be an interactive touchscreen database that provides access to the museum's extensive digital collection. This database will allow visitors to explore images, descriptions, and details of artifacts that may not be on physical display, due to space constraints. The database will also incorporate Penobscot language, adding layers of cultural meaning and providing a valuable resource for language revitalization.

2. **Video and Audio Exhibits**: High-quality video and audio installations will bring Penobscot culture and history to life through multimedia storytelling. These exhibits will feature recorded interviews, traditional songs, language pronunciations, and demonstrations of traditional practices by Penobscot artists and cultural keepers. These dynamic exhibits will help create a more immersive visitor experience and ensure that traditional knowledge is preserved and accessible.

3. **Digital Archive Infrastructure**: The project will establish a robust digital archive that serves as a permanent repository for all multimedia content, including images, videos, audio files, and digitized documents. This archive will support both on-site touchscreens and potential future online access, making the collection available for remote learning, research, and community use.

4. **Educational Modules and Language Content**: Embedded within the interactive database will be educational modules that offer deeper dives into specific aspects of Penobscot culture, including historical timelines, biographies, and language learning tools. These modules will serve as educational resources for community members, schools, and researchers, supporting intergenerational knowledge-sharing and helping to preserve the endangered Penobscot language.

5. **User-Friendly Interface for Research and Staff Use**: An intuitive, user-friendly interface will allow staff to update, manage, and expand the digital collection easily, ensuring that it remains current and comprehensive.

The system will also facilitate research use by community members, scholars, and educators who can access and study the collection in greater depth.

Through these products, the renovation project will ensure that the Penobscot Nation Museum becomes a sustainable, accessible, and immersive resource for preserving and sharing Penobscot heritage with a broad audience.

How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance?
Staff training will allow for updates and inclusion of new materials into the database and exhibit software as necessary to keep the exhibits current and functioning to their full potential. We will prepare for necessary equipment upgrades as technology advances. By investing in professional and quality exhibits at the beginning, we anticipate long term benefits such as reduced future costs, increased community engagement, and increased visitation. We see this leading to increased visitor donations, gift shop sales, more objects being donated back to the community, all contributing to long term sustainability.

If applicable, how will the care, condition, management, access to, or use of the collections and/or records that are the focus of your project improve?
As a result of the Penobscot Nation Museum Digital Museum Enhancement project, the care, condition, management, access to, and use of the museum's collections and records will be significantly enhanced:

1. **Care and Condition**: With advanced digital technology and multimedia installations, the project will reduce the physical handling of delicate artifacts and documents. By making these items accessible through digital interfaces, we will ensure their preservation and longevity, minimizing wear from physical display or handling. The improved storage infrastructure will also protect the physical artifacts in optimal environmental conditions, extending their preservation for future generations.

2. **Management**: This project will introduce a comprehensive, accessible database that centralizes all information related to the collection. This database will enable museum staff to efficiently manage and update records, making the collection easier to track, curate, and interpret. It will support both day-to-day operations and long-term planning, allowing us to better align the collection with educational programming and community engagement.

3. **Access**: Integrating pre-existing digital records to interactive touchscreens will provide visitors with unprecedented access to the museum's content. Community members, researchers, and visitors can explore artifacts, listen to audio recordings, and view images that may not be on physical display due to space limitations. By incorporating Penobscot language and historical context into these digital interfaces, we will also make cultural knowledge accessible to Penobscot and non-Native visitors alike, fostering greater engagement and understanding.

4. **Use**: The museum will serve as an invaluable resource for research, education, and cultural connection. Community members will have a comprehensive repository for learning and cultural engagement, which is especially vital for language revitalization efforts. For researchers, the digitized collection will facilitate study and discovery while minimizing physical handling of artifacts. Additionally, educators can use this resource to enrich their curriculum, bringing Penobscot history and language into classrooms and communities in new and dynamic ways.

Overall, this project will ensure that the Penobscot Nation Museum's collection is preserved, accessible, and actively used for educational and cultural purposes, reinforcing the museum's role as a steward of Penobscot heritage and a center for cross-cultural learning.

Digital Museum Enhancement Project - Schedule of Completion

Penobscot Nation	2025						2026											
	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Project Kickoff Meeting	X																	
Schematic Design I	X	X	X															
Schematic Design II				X	X	X												
Design Development I							X	X	X									
Design Development II								X	X	X								
Pre-Production											X	X						
Production/Fabrication													X	X	X			
Installation																X	X	X

Penobscot Nation – Digital Museum Enhancement Project

Digital Products Plan

This request seeks funding to support essential technology investments, specifically AV equipment, sound systems, lighting, touchscreens, and database infrastructure, enabling the museum to share its extensive collection in innovative and impactful ways.

Technology will effectively solve these constraints, allowing for a more immersive and comprehensive experience beyond traditional display methods. With a digitized collection, established database, and accompanying images and language content, we can leverage this technology to make a significant cultural impact.

These systems will offer rich multimedia content—such as videos, audio recordings, and interactive elements—that bring our exhibits to life. For example, visitors could explore the story of a master carver through images, stories, language elements, and video demonstrations of traditional tools in action.

1. **Type: Interactive Touchscreen Database**: A central product of this project will be an interactive touchscreen database that provides access to the museum's extensive digital collection. This database will allow visitors to explore images, descriptions, and details of artifacts that may not be on physical display due to space constraints. The database will also incorporate the Penobscot language, adding layers of cultural meaning and providing a valuable resource for language revitalization. Attributions will be embedded into the content to ensure intellectual and cultural property (ICIP) protections.

   • **Availability**: Presented through a kiosk at the museum.

   • **Access**: The Touchscreen Database kiosk will be a physical structure in the museum. It will be free to use. We will release these files under open-source licenses to maximize access and promote reuse. The Interactive Touchscreen Database content will be made freely and readily available for use and reuse by libraries, archives, museums, and the public.

   • **Sustainability**: The files displayed within the Touchscreen Database are archived, the physical touchscreen hardware is replaceable and updatable as needed.

2. **Type: Video and Audio Exhibits**: High-quality video and audio installations will bring Penobscot culture and history to life through multimedia storytelling. These exhibits will feature recorded interviews, traditional songs, language pronunciations, and demonstrations of traditional practices by Penobscot artists and cultural keepers. These dynamic exhibits will help create a more immersive visitor experience and ensure that traditional knowledge is preserved and accessible.

   • **Availability**: Presented as physical exhibits within the museum.

   • **Access**: Visitors will access the video and audio exhibits while at the museum at no additional cost. We are including script writing, recording, hardware, and integration of tools for the visually and hearing impaired. We will release these files under open-source licenses to maximize access and promote reuse. The Video and Audio Exhibit files will be made freely and readily available for use and reuse by libraries, archives, museums, and the public.

   • **Sustainability**: The audio and video exhibit content files will be archived, video and audio is replaceable and can be updated with newer technology as necessary.

3. **Type: Digital Archive Infrastructure**: The project will establish a robust digital archive that serves as a permanent repository for all multimedia content, including images, videos, audio files, and digitized documents. This archive will support both on-site touchscreens and potential future online access, making the collection available for remote learning, research, and community use.

   • **Availability**: This will be available on site with possible future online availability.

   • **Access**: We will release these files under open-source licenses to maximize access and promote reuse. Our Digital Archive will be made freely and readily available for use and reuse by libraries, archives, museums, and the public.

   • **Sustainability**: The files within the archive are protected with multiple back-up systems, including cloud based storage and multiple external hard drives stored in separate physical locations.

4. **Type: Educational Modules and Language Content**: Embedded within the interactive database will be educational modules that offer deeper dives into specific aspects of Penobscot culture, including historical timelines, biographies, and language learning tools. These modules will serve as educational resources for community members, schools, and researchers, supporting intergenerational knowledge-sharing and helping to preserve the endangered Penobscot language.

   • **Availability**: Presented within the Interactive Touchscreen Database available in a kiosk format at the museum.

   • **Access**: The Touchscreen Database kiosk will be a physical structure in the museum. It will be free to use. We will release the Educational Modules and Language Content files under open-source licenses to maximize access and promote reuse. The Educational Modules and Language Content will be made freely and readily available for online use and reuse by libraries, archives, museums, and the public.

   • **Sustainability**: The Educational Modules and Language Content files embedded within the Interactive Touchscreen Database are long-lived, requiring permanent preservation.

   User-Friendly Interface for Research and Staff Use: An intuitive, user-friendly interface will allow staff to update, manage, and expand the digital collection easily, ensuring that it remains current and comprehensive. The system will also facilitate research use by community members, scholars, and educators who can access and study the collection in greater depth.