Museums for America
Sample Application MA-249463-OMS-21
Project Category: Community Anchors

Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History

Amount awarded by IMLS: $193,768
Amount of cost share: $196,771

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:
https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/ma-249463-oms-21

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.
Project Justification

We titled our project *Kincentricity: Growing Community Through Learning Gardens*, after the Amah Mutsun view that all things—plants, animals, earth, air, water—are relatives, and as such, we are to care for them. Our project addresses two interconnected needs:

1. **To create space for ongoing conversations around community and creative ecologies** in response to the multiple challenges affecting our society today—from COVID to wildfires, racial inequity to political divisiveness—so that we can learn, support one another, heal, and grow beyond them.

2. **To increase public awareness, dispel misunderstanding, and advance the initiatives of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band**, the descendants of the tribal groups taken to Missions Santa Cruz and San Juan Bautista during Spanish colonization of the coast, who are the original stewards of the land on which Santa Cruz County stands, but are subject to past traumas and remain marginalized today.

Identifying these needs has been a multi-year process seated deep in formal and informal community conversations. The MAH dialogs extensively with our many partners and collaborators, and we take note when our community expresses a need—for example, by showing up in protest this summer to support the nationwide call for racial justice. These conversations have become more urgent in 2020. During the closures of the past year, we reflected on the state of our society, the needs of our community, and what we could do to help. We made a formal commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. The MAH has a long-standing tradition of elevating the voices of the underserved, embodied in our efforts to engage the Latinx community in a meaningful way. But there is also a consistent, community-wide call to center Indigenous peoples in conversations about equity and justice.

MAH staff has been attending City Council meetings to support Amah Mutsun initiatives to tell the true story of injustices dealt upon Indigenous people by the California mission system, and we attended the Tribal Band’s first public wellness meeting in October 2020. We continue to participate in meetings with the Amah Mutsun, California State Parks, City of Santa Cruz, and others about the future of our local Mission Plaza Park and proposed mission bell removal. The MAH is located in an area that was once a gathering place for local Indigenous groups, many of whom are now priced out of living in Santa Cruz County. We must start by looking at the lands upon which we live, and their traditional stewards, to heal as a community. The Amah Mustun concept of kinship can guide our efforts to develop better relationships with each other and the world. We formulated *Kincentricity* based on these findings:

- **Our community yearns to grow beyond social, ecological, and health challenges.** In the midst of a global pandemic, national uprisings for racial justice, a climate crisis causing local wildfires, and a charged political landscape, our community longs for connection and understanding, and a socially and ecologically just future.

- **The MAH can offer space for dialog and learning through history and art.** We have been envisioning how to use our public spaces to contribute to these conversations. Our Amah Mutsun partners helped us understand how, by starting with California native plants beneficial to birds, bees, butterflies, and insects, we can illustrate the deep interconnectedness of seemingly different communities. This concept of kinship can be further illuminated through artistic expression, and stewardship encouraged by understanding historical and contemporary Indigenous management practices. Through public gatherings, hands-on activities, and interpretative materials around these components, we can build bridges that connect communities.

- **There are long-standing misconceptions about Native peoples that need to be corrected.** These include the positive portrayal of the California mission system, when in fact the missions enslaved, tortured, and killed thousands; and the idea that Native peoples are gone, since museums often depict them as “past.” In 2017 the MAH worked with Native American photographer, Dugan Aguilar, to correct the latter in an exhibition illustrating Native California cultures today (Supporting Doc. 1). The MAH can amplify the Tribal Band’s efforts to correct errors by telling truth in history in the downtown center of Santa Cruz, and connecting visitors with other initiatives of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and Land Trust.
We can model stewardship through a better understanding of Indigenous worldview. Our current garden is made up of water-hungry non-native plants. By replacing them with California native pollinator plants, we can elevate the traditional ecological knowledge our partners have developed over millennia to help native flora and fauna thrive. In California, Indigenous people historically set ground fires to enhance resource productivity, quality, and availability, and to prevent large, catastrophic wildfires, a practice that was banned by newcomers in modern history. Our garden and supporting exhibitions can also serve as a resource for education about this technique, which has gained interest among wildland managers in recent years.

**Beneficiaries**

- **The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band**, made up of approximately 800 direct descendants of tribal groups whose ancestral lands include present-day Santa Cruz County, who survived the Spanish mission era. Because they are not federally recognized, they do not receive government support or have a reservation. Instead they reside largely in the San Joaquin Valley, nearly all living below poverty level. Today, the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band is working to reunite its people, regain knowledge, celebrate heritage, and protect their homeland. From start to finish *Kincentricity* is a collaborative process with the Tribal Band’s ideas and needs at its center, and the MAH serving as a vehicle to make it possible. We started by reaching out to the Tribal Band’s chairman, Valentin Lopez; and Rick Flores of the Amah Mutsun Relearning Program, which assists their efforts to revitalize culture and stewardship. Rick came for a site visit, and the Chairman brought the idea to the Tribal Band. The Amah Mutsun will select the issues, messages, and information they want to focus on, and the Native Stewardship Corps of young tribal members will guide volunteers to install the garden. The Tribal Band will be at the center of our redesigned History Gallery and art exhibition, providing messaging, stories, artifacts, and artwork.

- **The Santa Cruz community** will benefit from a permanent outdoor learning center with events, public tours, and activities; from Indigenous models for ecological stewardship and a greater understanding of our collective history; and from the stronger community that results from contemplating and connecting around ideas of kinship. Beneficiaries also include students and teachers, through field trips with hands-on activities that extend the K-12 curriculum; and commissioned artists. Plants, animals, and environment will benefit from stewardship practices fostered by their Amah Mutsun ambassadors. The community has been involved in the project through collaborator conversations and community actions that generated this multi-faceted focus—from the need to connect in the safety of an outdoor space, to the desire to highlight and learn from the experience of local Indigenous peoples. We plan to hold 1-2 community planning meetings once it becomes safe to do so.

*Kincentricity* advances the MAH’s strategic plan in the following ways:

- **It helps fulfill our mission to ignite shared experiences and unexpected connections, towards an ultimate vision of building a stronger, more connected community through art and history.** The garden provides a safe space—not only in terms of an outdoor venue in the current COVID era, but also the reflective spaces of artistic expression and historical interpretation—where people from diverse backgrounds can engage and dialog, sparking connections that grow understanding and strengthen community. Our project is all about recognizing and nurturing relationships—with ourselves, each other, and our world. It helps make visible the often-unseen connections between people and places that span our shared history to the present day.

- **It utilizes community-building strategies outlined in our Theory of Change.** It builds awareness and respect for diverse cultures and people through an exploration of art and history, in order to help us build bridges across our differences. We do this by elevating the voices of the Amah Mutsun people to grow awareness of and understanding for California Indigenous peoples, past and present. In this way we work to ensure that the Amah Mutsun and other participants feel empowered to share their creative and civic voices. Through interactive art and history experiences, we create an environment in which participants not only make unexpected connections but also personal connections upon which long-standing relationships are built.

- **It supports our goal to transform the MAH into a welcoming hub that celebrates and reflects the diversity of our community.** Only 1.8% of Santa Cruz County residents are Indigenous, though all tribal
ancestors once called this land home. When we consider community diversity, we must include those upon whose ancestral lands the MAH stands. Our past efforts to highlight the Amah Mutsun and other local Indigenous peoples have included exhibitions (Supporting Doc. 1), events, publications (Supporting Doc. 2), and the 2020 installation of a plaque acknowledging this land as the unceded territory of the Awaswas-speaking Uypi Tribe. Kincentricity furthers this goal by creating spaces, indoors and out, where the Amah Mutsun not only feel welcome, but integral.

Our project addresses the IMLS goal to Build Capacity by strengthening our capacity to improve our community’s wellbeing. We do that by serving as a trusted space for community engagement and dialog.

- **Building community capacity** – Much of the conversation between the Amah Mutsun, MAH, collaborators, and community takes place during planning and development. People must understand one another and work together to reach a consensus on the theme and content of an exhibition, or a truth-telling curriculum. We anticipate there may be strong feelings or opposing viewpoints. Our role is to facilitate these conversations in a safe and supportive space where all participants feel included and empowered to share their views. Through them, the MAH helps partners and collaborators build capacity for navigating issues that matter, before taking our work to the larger community with unified messaging and activities that spark engagement, dialog, and learning. We also strengthen capacity to improve the wellbeing of our community as the Amah Mutsun see it—including plants and animals, earth, air, and water—through hands-on activities that teach people how to create pollinator pathways, landscape with California native plants, or engage in other types of stewardship.

- **Building the MAH’s capacity** - The MAH is experienced in facilitating dialog and community-sourced exhibitions, guided by our *Community Issue Exhibition Toolkit* (Supporting Doc. 3). We are eager to grow staff experience further through this important work. The project will also enable us to continue developing best practices around relationship-building with partners and collaborators. For example, the museum industry often engages partners without compensating them, which we recognize as a barrier to participation by low-income individuals. We will compensate Indigenous artists for their work, as well as the Amah Mutsun Relearning Program and the Amah Mutsun Land Trust’s Native Stewardship Corps. We know that working with culturally specific partners requires great thoughtfulness and care, especially when there is mistrust caused by historical trauma. We see our project as laying the foundation to center Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in the work we do in a way that is visible and long-standing, growing our capacity to work together for years to come.

We are applying in the *Community Anchors* category, which our project embodies in several ways. It creates trusted spaces for learning, debate, and community dialog, and is based in a collaborative process to address needs and promote understanding of this marginalized group. Through the project, we deepen and strengthen our existing partnerships with the Tribal Band and collaborators to nurture a livable, sustainable community for all stakeholders.

**Project Work Plan**

**Key Partners**

- **Amah Mutsun Tribal Band** and its affiliates, including:
  - **Amah Mutsun Land Trust**, led by President Valentin Lopez and Interim Executive Director Sara French - Concept development, co-creation of materials/programs. Point of contact for Indigenous artist outreach
  - **Native Stewardship Corps** – Amah Mutsun Land Trust youth corps responsible for transitioning the garden, training volunteers, and contributing to interpretive materials and programming
  - **Amah Mutsun Relearning Program**, led by Rick Flores at UC Santa Cruz Arboretum - Primary contact for garden planning, management, and cultural plant education

**Programming Collaborators** – The MAH engages collaborators to partner on programming as a general practice, and we will continue to identify and engage additional collaborators throughout the project. Here is a starting list:

- **Humunya Foundation**, the Tribal Band’s fundraising arm - Speaker series collaborator (NEW)
PROPOSAL NARRATIVE  
MAH / The Museum of Art & History at the McPherson Center

- **UCSC American Indian Resource Center**, Rebecca Hernandez – Point of contact to engage Indigenous artists in the community; prospective partner for marketing and/or event collaboration
- **Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation** and **California State Park Historian Martin Rizzo** – Collaborators on interpretive material with the Mission Park Plaza Project revisioning and mission bell removal
- **White Hawk Indian Council** – Prospective programming partner to engage in Phase II (NEW)
- **The Humanities Institute (THI) at UC Santa Cruz** – Prospective collaborator on panel discussions. THI is a long-time MAH partner that specializes in public engagement.
- **Center for Racial Justice at UC Santa Cruz** - Prospective collaborator on panel discussions
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- **SC Community Farmers’ Markets** – A place for informational displays, building on our past collaborations
- **Whale People: Protectors of the Sea** with the Lummi Nation and Natural History Museum – Prospective programming/regional collaborator for Phase II. We are in conversation now. (NEW)
- **Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History**, Marisa Gomez – Collaborator on interpretive material
- **UC Santa Cruz Research Center for the Americas**, Director Sylvanna M. Falcón - Point of contact to engage Indigenous artists at UC Santa Cruz
- **Senderos** – Prospective Phase II collaborator to connect local and Latin American Indigenous history and art

**Project Activities & Sequence**

The collaborative planning we initiated with our key partners in 2020 will be ongoing throughout the project as new components are developed and active components assessed and modified. It will take the form of small-group, virtual or live meetings quarterly, with additional meetings as needed. We also plan to host 1-2 community-wide meetings to discuss the project theme and activities during Year 1 (Fall 2021 to Summer 2022).

Starting in September 2021, we will begin curriculum development with our partners and collaborators. This supports a major goal of the Humunya Foundation, which seeks to develop age-appropriate curriculum that tells the true story of the Amah Mutsun, including the impact of the mission system on Indigenous cultures. More than 2,000 K-12 students will experience this trilingual (Spanish, English, and Awaswas) curriculum at the MAH annually. We will also collaborate on the content for our History Gallery update, as well as the Lezin Gallery exhibition of artwork by Indigenous artists on the themes of kinship, ecological stewardship, and community.

In Winter/Spring 2022 we will transition the garden, working with volunteers and the Native Stewardship Corps to re-home the current plants and plant native plants selected by the Amah Mutsun. This includes developing community programming around the garden such as plant tours, hands-on Work & Learn Days, and student lessons on how to care for pollinators. The interpretive materials will help connect the exhibitions to the messages the Amah Mutsun wish to tell. Indigenous artists will contribute to the design of interpretive materials, the reimagining of our garden wall, and 3-D temporary artworks to animate the garden.

In Summer 2022 we will launch Activation Phase I with a public opening—unveiling the new garden, year-long Lezin Gallery art exhibition, and updated History Gallery, as well as our slate of public programs, community gatherings, field trips, public art commissions, and educational offerings. We will fund transportation and lodging to enable Amah Mutsun participants to be present for the opening and other activities. We are considering a number of ideas for our Phase I public programming, to be selected and developed via collaborative process. To support this, we will hold community information sessions for volunteers and prospective new collaborators who wish to work in the garden, lead tours, or propose their own programs. Other ideas include: Pollinator Pathway maker workshops and plant exchanges; extending the UC Santa Cruz Amah Mutsun Speaker Series to our downtown site; panel discussions with scholars, Indigenous representatives, and collaborators around important issues; a Take Action wall that invites support of partner initiatives; and a community-wide moment of silence and kinship reflection. We will offer programming at the MAH as well as at sites throughout the county. This phase can be understood as our Local Series, in which we elevate the specific needs, issues, and truths of our Amah Mutsun partners. It will encompass Years 1 and 2 of the project period, running through Summer 2023.
In *Activation Phase II* we seek to seat our project in the context of regional or global conversations around Indigenous history, needs, and artistic interpretations, with our Amah Mutsun partners at the center. Collaborative planning for this phase will take place from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023. In it, the partner team and collaborators will identify a series of activations in the form of installations, performances, or interdisciplinary works by regional, national, and/or international artists, to animate indoor and outdoor spaces around the MAH and Santa Cruz County from Summer 2023 to Summer 2024. This *Global Series* will be accompanied by a *Phase II* slate of public programs decided on by the team. Ideas include artist talks, a study session on traditional Indigenous lands worldwide, storytelling connecting local Indigenous with our Latinx partners who have ties to Native Latin American cultures; and activities connecting Amah Mutsun and local youth with Indigenous projects elsewhere. This phase supports the MAH’s efforts to spark cross-pollination between local, regional, and global artists and collaborators—a direction we are emphasizing in our 2020 strategic planning process.

Evaluation is ongoing in both activation phases. We will conduct intercept surveys at a select number of events and activities, while tracking data like attendance, demographics, programs and activities, and actions taken to support the Amah Mutsun. This information will be used for ongoing evaluation of the programs’ effectiveness at regular planning team meetings, as well as at formal program evaluations conducted with our partners annually. At the culmination of the project, we will plan for the future with our partners—selecting the most impactful programming to offer beyond the project period, and identifying opportunities for ongoing collaboration.

**Personnel & Resources**

*Kincentricity* is a multi-year investment of time and resources that will lead to permanent assets that the MAH can offer for years to come with a minimum of management once they are established. By spending the time and energy to develop deep and sustainable partnerships, we also lay the groundwork for long-term collaborations that contribute to community wellbeing into the future.

The project is led by our Exhibitions & Programs team, with Director Marla Novo managing staff in producing the exhibitions, public programming, and learning and engagement activities. Project Manager Whitney Ford-Terry takes the lead role in partner engagement and co-planning, working directly with artists and collaborators to organize exhibitions and develop programming, and all aspects of implementing and managing the project, including tracking internal data. Whitney has already engaged our key partners, reached out to collaborators, hosted a site visit, and started co-planning. Our Design & Production Manager Justin Collins assists with spatial design and engineering support. Last, our Learning & Engagement Manager Jamie Keil facilitates the external evaluations.

Executive Director Robb Woulfe will continue to provide vision, leadership, and management expertise in program development, financial planning, fundraising, and communications. Together with the board and staff, he advances the MAH’s commitment to diversity and inclusion by pursuing partnerships that enhance collaboration, capacity-building, community engagement, and civic dialogue. Although new in his role as of early 2020, Robb has been working to secure support for *Kincentricity* by re-engaging past donors and funders. He takes the lead on marketing and resource management, supported by the Development & Communications and Operations & Facilities teams.

As detailed in our budget, project costs will total $390,538 during the three years of the requested IMLS grant of $193,767. We will allocate cost sharing funds from the following sources: the Packard Foundation, which provides $50,000 annually (renewal expected for 2022-23); Hewlett Foundation, $45,000 annually (renewal expected for 2021-22); and museum members and donors, who provide $325,000 annually. The MAH will also commit physical and infrastructure resources including equipment, technology, gallery space, and collection and archival repositories. Our partners and collaborators are important resources, providing time, expertise, and exhibition spaces.

**Project Risks:**

- **The possible perceived co-option and institutionalization of Indigenous wisdom and practices.** To mitigate this, MAH staff will work directly in support of the principles and practices put forth by our key
partners. We are here to support and help facilitate the process; the themes, ideas, and concepts come directly from our partners, with full public credit and compensation for their time and participation.

- **It is not always clear when we should take the lead and when we should serve as a resource.** Staff may feel motivated to jump in to resolve problems, accelerate the project, or contribute ideas. To mitigate the risk of overstep, our project manager will work directly with Valentin Lopez, Sara French, and Rick Flores to reach consensus on decisions that need to be made outside the collaborative process.

- **Possible perceived unwelcomeness by community members.** For some, **Kincentricity** may challenge pride in the missions or beliefs about land ownership, leading to a feeling of unwelcomeness. We will mitigate this with careful, sensitive, facilitated dialog and programming that is inclusive of diverse perspectives and builds bridges between people. We want the MAH to be welcoming for *all* members of our community, a goal we are discussing in our 2020 strategic planning process.

- **We could get overextended** if we try to take on too much, or focus on socio-ecological programs at the expense of art and history. To mitigate this, we will plan ahead and vet our plans carefully, while staying flexible and open to partner and collaborator ideas. We will partner as stewards of culture and land while keeping art and history at the foreground, reminding ourselves that these are our primary areas of focus and expertise.

**Tracking Progress & Sharing Results**

Throughout the project, our partner team will track progress toward the intended results outlined below. We will review data informally during partner meetings, and formally in our annual program evaluation. The early data serves as a baseline from which to assess progress. We seek positive trends on survey respondents’ numeric ratings, and evidence for intended results in their written responses. We will also have frank conversations based on observations by MAH staff and partners, and use what we learn to adjust our programs as needed. At the project’s close, MAH staff will prepare a report to distribute via email to our partners, collaborators, board, and trustees. We will present the outcomes at a public board meeting, and in our annual “state of the MAH” community forum.

**Project Results**

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<th>Intended Results</th>
<th>Need Addressed</th>
<th>Data-gathering Tool</th>
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| Knowledge, understanding, and support of Amah Mutsun and local Indigenous peoples and practices will grow. | To increase awareness of Indigenous people and practices, dispel misunderstanding, and advance initiatives of the Amah Mutsun | - Intercept surveys  
- Actions taken  
- Annual program evaluation  
- MAH surveys |
| Tribal members and local Indigenous will feel welcome and included at the MAH, and central to the project and community. | To increase awareness of Indigenous people and practices, dispel misunderstanding, and advance initiatives of the Amah Mutsun | - Partner survey  
- Annual program evaluation |
| Concept of kinship will catalyze community reflection, unity, and stewardship. | To provide space for connection and dialog so that we can grow beyond today’s challenges as a community | - Intercept surveys  
- Annual program evaluation  
- MAH surveys |
| 15+ organizations representing a diverse cross-section of the community will collaborate on programming. | To provide space for connection and dialog so that we can grow beyond today’s challenges as a community | - Number and makeup of collaborators and partners |
| Exhibitions and public programs will spark connections between diverse community members. | To provide space for connection and dialog so that we can grow beyond today’s challenges as a community | - Intercept surveys  
- Programs (#/attendance)  
- MAH surveys |
• Intercept surveys – Staff and volunteers will conduct intercept surveys at a select number of activities annually. Guests rate their experiences and write in answers that speak to our intended results—for example, what they learned, what kinship means for community, and if they had a conversation with a person from a different background. We will design the tool using our Who’s Coming? Respectful Audience Surveying Kit (Supporting Doc. 4).

• Partner survey – Tailored to our Amah Mutsun and Indigenous collaborators, this will assess qualitative metrics like feelings of welcomeness and inclusion, feedback on initiatives, and ideas for future directions.

• Actions taken – A tally of the number and types of support generated by our Take Action wall

• Collaborators – The MAH is committed to engaging collaborators who represent a diverse spectrum of our community. We will track the number and makeup of collaborators.

• Annual program evaluation – Partner meeting to study data, share observations, and assess progress

• Programs & activities – Number of, and attendance to, Kincentricity programs and activities

• MAH surveys – Our regular museum visitor survey will assess “feelings of welcomeness,” opinions on exhibitions, and demographic data. We also email surveys to our patrons regarding MAH programming.

• Staff time – We will track staff time on task to measure program sustainability.

Tangible Products

• Permanent community learning garden of beneficial California native plants for public gatherings and programming, that visibly announces our ongoing commitment to the Amah Mutsun people

• History Gallery update to include the mission system, and how the Amah Mutsun historically used fire to renew the land and prevent destructive wildfires. This becomes a permanent resource we can evolve over time.

• Lezin Gallery exhibition – Year-long exhibition of work by Amah Mutsun and other Indigenous artists

• Commissioned public artworks – These multidisciplinary visual and performing arts commissions will include works by local, regional, national, and/or international artists, moving from our locally-focused Phase I to connecting global with local perspectives in Phase II.

• Interpretive materials – Trilingual English/Spanish/Awaswas materials that aid understanding of project components, such as signs, guides, workbooks, web content, and more

• Curriculum – Trilingual K-12 components created around the exhibitions and garden as a resource for the Amah Mutsun, MAH staff, collaborators, teachers, and students

Audience Changes

• Amah Mutsun: Tribal members will feel empowered to participate at the MAH, within the Tribal Band, and in partner initiatives. They will share their civic voices—especially younger and underserved tribal members. They will feel as though the community cares. They will also learn tribal knowledge, ecological stewardship practices, and plants that may not be known due to the radical acculturation and division the Tribal Band has faced.

• Santa Cruz community: Knowledge and skills related to native plant gardening and management for ecological longevity will increase. The community’s understanding of the Amah Mutsun and mission system will also grow, generating understanding for the struggles these people have faced. Community behavior towards plants and people will be influenced by the idea of kinship. The larger community will be inspired to build connections with people from different backgrounds, and motivated to support tribal efforts and initiatives.

Sustaining the Project Benefits

We designed our project to be sustainable without significant ongoing investments of staff time or funds. Permanent assets created through it will be used by the MAH well into the future, and their ongoing management becomes part of normal museum operations. We are tracking staff hours to assess the project’s sustainability on that front, and expect a decrease once the components are built out. We also anticipate that our investment of time and resources in relationship-building with our key partners and collaborators will grow our capacity to work together on future projects, contributing to the long-term sustainability of community-wide initiatives.
## SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

**MAH / The Museum of Art and History at the McPherson Center**

### PRE-GRANT

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### YEAR 1

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**Internal data tracking:** staff hours, collaborator #/makeup, # programs/activities (quarterly)