



## Museums Empowered

Sample Application ME-245957-OMS-20  
Project Category: Organizational Management

## Thanksgiving Point Institute

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$212,051
Amount of cost share:	\$259,072

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:  
<https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/me-245957-oms-20>

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing applications for the FY2021 Museums Empowered grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2020 applications. Be sure to use the instructions in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

## PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

**What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?** Thanksgiving Point Institute (TPI) respectfully requests \$212,051 to provide professional development training and skill mastery for both native and non-native English speaking employees to advance from maintenance crews to horticulture professionals. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit farm, garden, and museum complex that draws upon the natural world to cultivate transformative family learning. Founded in 1995, Thanksgiving Point employs over 500 employees and serves over 2 million guests annually at its venues and through a mix of programs including signature experiences, educational offerings, catered events, dining, and shopping.

Located in Lehi, Utah, Thanksgiving Point is at the center of Utah's rapid population growth, equidistant from the major Provo and Salt Lake City metropolitan areas. Utah's population is expected to nearly double in the next 45 years, with a large portion of that growth being minority populations. Policy analysts have projected that "the share of Utah's minority population will increase from approximately 20 percent in 2015 to 35 percent in 2065. Half of Utah's population growth from 2015 to 2065 will come from minority populations. Among minority populations, Hispanics show the largest numerical increase with approximately 850,000 new Utah residents from 2015 to 2065, reaching 1.3 million."<sup>1</sup>

As our surrounding community becomes more racially diverse, TPI's staff reflects this trend. TPI's Horticulture Collection and Maintenance (HC&M) staff is its most racially diverse division with 50% of its employees from Hispanic descent. At any given time, English is the second language for 50-70% of those employees.

Considering the demographic change in population of our surrounding communities, we anticipate seeing an increase in English as a Second Language (ESL) staffing rather than a decline. Additionally, there is a significant gap between new employees with some advanced horticultural education and seasoned employees with simple garden and maintenance care skills that is widening in proportion with the demographic changes. TPI's Professional Development project goals are: (1) provide horticultural competence based trainings for both English and Spanish speakers in their native languages to retain and attract new employees from diverse cultures; (2) empower our HC&M staff through education to create an inclusive environment and increase employees' sense of belonging; (3) develop a career training pathway for advancement and increased pay that will result in a professionally trained horticulture team; (4) increase HC&M staff professionalism to establish TPI as an advanced horticultural institution.

**Are others addressing this need? What other studies or best practices have you used in developing your project?** TPI is the largest cultural institution in Utah and one of the most highly-attended in the nation, hosting 2,065,000 visitors annually with an overall fiscal impact of \$68,178,000. Equally important to our organization are TPI's social responsibilities, especially to our employees. We value our employees and work to be inclusive of their input, ideas, and experiences. We want each employee to have a sense of belonging to the team. TPI recognizes that learning is a collaborative construct and as such, diversity in employee backgrounds and cultures deepens the ways in which we make corporate decisions to best serve our communities through venue designs, programs, exhibit and galleries, and signature events. We subscribe to Rock & Grant's findings that "the benefits of diversity can be experienced within organizations and communities that recognize the importance and value of inclusivity. Diverse teams are more likely to constantly reexamine facts and remain objective. They may also encourage greater scrutiny of each member's actions, keeping their joint cognitive resources sharp and vigilant."<sup>2</sup>

Our commitment to provide fair and inclusive professional development opportunities to our employees is also the focus of others in the museum community and well as in businesses nationwide. By some estimates,

<sup>1</sup> Hollingshaus, M., Harris, E., Perlich, P. (April 2019), Utah's Increasing Diversity: Population Projections by Race/Ethnicity, University of Utah – Kem Gardner Policy Institute

<sup>2</sup> Rock, D., & Grant, H. (2016). Why diverse teams are smarter. *Harvard Business Review*, 4(4), 2-5.

“...roughly one in every seven U.S. workers is an immigrant. Employers are responding by offering on-the-job training in non-English speakers' native languages to help ensure they develop the skills necessary to perform their jobs. By doing so, employers can make sure their staff are properly trained and have reasonable opportunities for promotion and advancement in a predominantly English-speaking environment.”<sup>3</sup>

An evaluation of the Workplace ESL program at three Levi Strauss production plants has been helpful in TPI's Horticulture Management's approach to providing useful and impactful training components to horticultural staff, both English and Spanish speakers, that will maximize employee participation, improve skill sets, provide opportunities for advancement and pay increases, assist in employee retention and new applicants, and bridge the gap between native and non-native English speakers in our Horticulture staff.<sup>4</sup> The results of Levi Strauss' ESL program are included as an attachment to this grant application. The main points of crossover are: the program must be seen as a “priority” rather than an option; the program needs to be high profile for the organization and promoted via workplace posters and/or employee information packets; supervisors should be educated about the professional development program available to all employees and not torn between the new program and the demands of production.

**How will your project advance your institution's strategic plan?** Thanksgiving Point was established as a center for community engagement, a place that would reflect the community's interests and values: family togetherness, transformative learning, and enjoyment of outdoors/nature. TPI is a community anchor where families draw closer together because of the experiences they share. As stated in TPI's Strategic Plan, we lead by engaging our community of stakeholders to create meaningful experiences that:

- Cause visitors to reevaluate existing impressions through new experiences, thus bringing new meaning and perspective to their lives and the natural world around them.
- Promote collaborative learning experiences that are interactive, engaging, and naturally lead to further discussion.
- Embed our organization as a trusted anchor of informal educational experiences within our surrounding community and throughout the state.

In October 2019, Thanksgiving Point's 500+ employees united in purpose and voted to adopt an organization-wide Aspirational Goal for 2020. The chosen theme is “Welcoming All.” The aspirational goal unifies our daily actions, attitudes, and work with TPI's founding purpose, mission and strategic plan core values:

“As cultivators of transformative family learning, we accept people as they are, and we welcome them without expectation.”<sup>5</sup> In action, this Aspirational Goal entails the following:

- Being accessible to all (programming, venues, events).
- Removing barriers (physical, social, economic, language, cultural, etc.)
- Improving experiences by reflecting our community and co-creating experiences with them.

Creating a professional development program for our employees with a focus on equitable access to its benefits aligns organically with TPI's founding, mission, strategic core values, and employee 2020 Aspirational Goal. With this project, the “Welcoming to All” and strategic plan values become inclusive internal transformative learning experiences for our own employees. The training component professionalizes our HC&M staff by providing job-related learning and educational experiences, encouraging inter-department collaborative learning, and removing language barriers to give equitable access to new skill sets and pathways to career advancement.

<sup>3</sup> Looper, L. (July 2010), "How Professional Development Programs Work," HowStuffWorks.com. <https://money.howstuffworks.com/business/professional-development/professional-development-programs.htm>, retrieved 13 November 2019

<sup>4</sup> Pierce, B., Harper, H., Burnaby, B. (1993), Workplace ESL at Levi Strauss: “Dropouts” Speak Out

<sup>5</sup> Thanksgiving Point Institute Strategic Plan (2011)

**How will your project address the goals of the Museums Empowered initiative?** The IMLS Museums Empowered initiative goals are to enhance employee skills and ensure the highest standards in all aspects of museum operations ensuring long-term sustainability and relevancy. TPI's Professional Development program will build our organization's attractiveness to potential employees from diverse populations, specifically, the Hispanic community – Utah's second most prevalent, and rapidly growing, racial demographic in Utah. We've identified a trend in our own organization of a disconnect between native English and Spanish speakers. By adopting best practices and providing multiple opportunities to increase skills and knowledge base for all HC&M staff, both English and Spanish speakers, we will eliminate an education-based discrepancy between the two groups, ultimately creating inclusive teams and a stronger workforce.

Developing our HC&M teams from garden maintenance crews to horticulture professionals addresses the IMLS goals of managing change in order to stay relevant and vital. The work accomplished by our HC&M teams is imperative to bringing in guests to our outdoor venues (Ashton Gardens, Discovery Garden, and Farm Country) and to the Butterfly Biosphere. Guests have countless reasons for coming to these venues, including learning about ways to incorporate and cultivate the same shrubs, plants, and trees found in our outdoor galleries into their own landscapes. Employees with only basic garden maintenance knowledge and skill sets can unknowingly stunt or harm landscapes. They rely heavily on direction from their supervisors rather than having the knowledge base to make small decisions on their own. In the Spring of 2019, a subset of the HC&M team caused significant damage to a series of shrubs. The damage caused an immediate need to replace the shrubs at a cost of \$9,000. This type of error is not common, however, when it occurs, it's costly to our organization. Organizational sustainability includes being cost conscious. Ensuring that we maintain a high standard of cultivation in all garden galleries property wide not only helps us remain relevant to our visitors but is fiscally wise.

**How will your project align with Organizational Management?** TPI's efforts to advance professionalism in our HC&M staff will contribute to TPI's long term sustainability and relevancy in our community by incorporating a lens of equity to the design of this project from beginning to end. The proposed training and professional development opportunities for our HC&M staff will incorporate best practices in current and advanced horticultural skill sets guided by collaborations with USU Extension Horticultural experts, and validated throughout TPI's internal evaluation team, and an outside audience research and evaluation team specializing in cross cultural evaluations by The Garibay Group.

### **PROJECT WORK PLAN**

**What is your project's maturity level (i.e., exploratory, piloting, scaling, or mainstreaming)?** The HC&M Professional Development project has passed the initial exploratory phase which involved a needs assessment with key stake holders (department director, subset managers whose primary languages are either English or Spanish, and staff members) to determine departmental shortfalls, potential communication gaps, and possible barriers to understanding instructions, work productivity, and skill development. The exploratory phase also included collaborative work with Utah State University Extension's Associate Professor of Horticulture, Michael Caron. Mr. Caron wrote a series of instructional online training modules to be used by students in rural communities. Mr. Caron has worked with our HC&M's Horticulture Coordinator, Sarah Allred, over the past three months to create the basic training outline for both formal online and hands-on training. Caron and Allred identified nine areas of emphasis for horticultural proficiency:

Basic Botany	Soil Basics	Turf
Annuals/Perennials	Trees and Shrubs	Flowerbed Design

Irrigation	Pest Management	Tool Maintenance and Equipment Care
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The next step is to create training modules based on these nine areas of proficiency. Three to five modules will be created for each area and will include 20-30 minutes of video instruction as well as hands-on training working with the Horticulture team that specializes in that area. Video training modules will be both lectures based and recorded demonstrations of horticulture skills, and it will conclude with quizzes to assess competency. When an employee completes a quiz with an 80% pass rate, and has mastered the skills taught, as determined by a Garden team manager, they will be able to move on to the next area. Employees will be able to complete training during work hours.

These modules can be completed by employees during work hours. The first training module will be part of the onboarding process when an employee is hired. Participation in the second through ninth training areas will be optional. If HC&M employees choose to advance through the modules, they will master the skill sets for each area of proficiency at their own pace.

IMLS funding will be used to build upon this foundational work by detailing logistics for training progression, recognition, and awards (including budgeting pay increases for skill development); designing the design of the training modules; writing, filming, editing, and evaluation of training videos; initiating roll-out of training videos and progression of employee advancement opportunities; and conducting evaluations to determine achievement of project outcomes that will determine success.

**What specific activities, including evaluation, will you carry out? When and in what sequence will your activities occur? Who will plan, implement, and manage your project? What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?**

Year 1 (9/1/20 – 8/31/21):

- Detailed design of progressive employee advancement plan. The design will be done by Tony Latimer, Director of Horticulture, and Sarah Allred, Horticulture Coordinator. The plan will undergo professional peer review by Ricardo Camargo, TPI Gardens Campus Manager. Camargo is an ESL employee and manager with extensive horticultural knowledge and experience, including a degree in horticulture.
- Detailed design of training modules will be done by Sarah Allred and Michael Caron.
- Training scripts for film production will be written by Allred and Caron.
- Training scripts will undergo peer review by Tony Latimer and Ricardo Camargo.
- Stephen Ashton, PhD., Director of Audience Research and Evaluations and Kari Nelson, Research and Evaluation Associate, will coordinate with Cecilia Garibay, PhD., and the Garibay Group to conduct formative, culturally responsive evaluations of the training components and employee advancement plan and training components.

Year 2 (9/1/2021 – 8/31/22)

- Written script training module components will be adapted for Spanish speakers by Cassandra Camargo, an independent outside translator commonly used by TPI. The translations will be reviewed by Ricardo Camargo to ensure that the horticultural content and skills maintain accuracy during translation and are worded for the target audience as intended.
- Film production and editing of training modules will be done in both English and Spanish versions by native speakers. Three quotes from local videographers will be solicited based on quality of their previous work and hourly rate. Budget calculations for these services are based on the current average hourly rate of local production services in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- The first horticulture training area emphasis, Basic Botany, will be filmed and edited. As part of the evaluation process Dr. Garibay will coordinate with Ashton and Nelson to evaluate the prototype and gather feedback from selected employees. Final edits will be made to the video reflecting these

formative evaluation recommendations. Subsequent training videos will be produced following the improved format.

- Initial rollout of the employee advancement plan and training components will begin during the second year.
- Cross-channel Learning Management System purchased, and educational content uploaded. Employees will use the LMS to interface with the training modules and complete competency quizzes.

Year 3 (9/1/22 – 8/31/23)

- Continued roll out of progressive employee advancement plan and training components, with process evaluation along the way.
- Garibay Group will conduct summative evaluation to determine success based on meeting intended project outcomes.
- Training video components will be open sourced and uploaded through YouTube Channels.
- Professional Conference Session Presentations at APGA, AAM, VSA, and UMA.

**What are the risks to the project and have you identified ways to monitor or mitigate risk in the work plan?**

TPI recognizes two primary risks inherent to this project. First, providing training to improve employee skill sets could result in those employees leaving TPI to join a for-profit business that will pay a higher wage than our non-profit can afford. However, the opportunity to provide training also makes these employees more valuable to TPI and is worth the risk to ensure better horticultural professionalism and care. In addition, elevating TPI's overall horticultural competence will establish our organization as a resource for the 6 local universities for research purposes and internship opportunities for their students.

Second, our HC&M employees may opt out of advancement opportunities. However, the self-selection of advanced training components is not necessarily negative. Not all employees need to advance. Some employees that choose to stay at beginning levels will be accommodated by letting them maintain the basic horticultural upkeep across property. All educational components will address the benefits of increasing personal horticultural knowledge. Increasing skills increases the employee's value to TPI and therefore results in incremental pay increases and additional responsibilities.

**How does the makeup of the project team and/or partners and collaborators provide an opportunity for the project to benefit from diverse perspectives, shared networks, and best practices? How will collaborations you have proposed be structured in a way that is equitable and mutually beneficial in order to strengthen your project? How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?**

The competencies of the project team will allow us to maximize resources, bring diverse perspectives, and reach a wide audience. First, collaborating with Mike Caron from USU Extension will result in significant savings of time and money. His prior experience creating similar successful horticulture training components shortens the design time process significantly. Focusing his expertise and time to help develop the details of the nine areas of emphasis for horticultural proficiency and the accompanying training videos will allow us to quickly address changing demographics of TPI's employees and Utah's population. This topic will be a subject of study and share out for him through professional publications and presentations at horticulture conferences.

Second, currently employed ESL horticulture team members (including Carmago, among others) will provide crucial benefit to this project as they. These will ensure all advancement and training components will be culturally appropriate and relevant to Garden needs. They will also appropriately contribute to the evaluation and translation review, ensuring the translations will be understandable to all Hispanic employees regardless of their country of origin.

Third, TPI's Research and Evaluation team (Ashton and Nelson) will apply evaluation best practices throughout the project, gathering user feedback and experience data so we can make usability changes quickly.

Finally, TPI's HC&M employees will benefit personally from participating in the professional training and development offered. Additional career opportunities at TPI based on an area of specialized interests like flower bed design. Cross departmental careers will also be available with TPI's Learning and Engagement Team to develop and conduct programming for Spanish speaking audiences or audiences for whom the staff member's specialized skill set is in demand. Increased horticultural skill sets and knowledge make the HC&M staff more valuable to outside businesses as well opening many more windows of career advancement opportunities than existed prior to participating in the training program.

**How and with whom will you share your project's results?** TPI's Professional Development project results will be shared with all key stakeholders including Thanksgiving Point's Board of Trustees, Board of Advisors, Senior Management, Joint Management, and staff. TPI will share summative evaluations with our USU Extension partners who took an active part in the design process and collaborate on written publications about the project.

TPI also values the opportunity to help other museums and gardens working to stay inclusive and relevant to their changing communities. TPI's HC&M Team members and Audience Research and Development Team will submit session proposals for the following conferences to share our experience broadly: Visitors Studies Association, American Alliance of Museums, Utah Museum Association, American Public Gardens Association, and American Horticultural Therapy Association. Similarly, opportunities to publish in professional journals will be sought.

Finally, the professional advancement plan and the nine areas of emphasis for horticultural proficiency with the accompanying digital training videos will be made available through Thanksgiving Point's YouTube channel, benefitting other organizations in their horticultural cultivation and maintenance, and employee advancement efforts.

## **PROJECT RESULTS**

**What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified?** Our intended project results are (1) Create a professional HC&M advancement plan and related increased pay structure to empower our HC&M staff through education and (2) establish training, in both English and Spanish in nine areas of emphasis for horticultural proficiency and accompanying training videos and skill masteries that will increase HC&M staff professionalism and establish TPI as an advanced horticultural institution. These results will help Thanksgiving Point create an inclusive environment that increases employee's sense of belonging, as well as retain and attract new employees from diverse cultures.

**How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the intended audience change as a result of your project?** We anticipate changes in knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes among HC&M staff who engage in the program. They will gain horticultural knowledge and skills as the complete training modules in each area of proficiency. With advanced knowledge and skills, they will be more confident and take pride in their work. We hope, knowing that their input has been sought since the inception of this project and will be sought throughout the life of it, that non-native English speaking employees will understand that they are valued, welcomed, and treated equitably at Thanksgiving Point. These changes will be assessed as part of evaluation efforts in all three years of the project.

**What barriers might there be for others who may wish to learn from and/or adapt your results in developing their own projects?** Other museums may have more diverse surrounding community and employee

populations. As a result, our English and Spanish horticulture training videos may fulfill only a portion of their needs. It's also possible that different demographics would include native Spanish speakers from multiple Hispanic countries. Therefore, the Spanish curriculum and videos may not be useful to those employees. Additionally, small to medium sized museums may not have the financial capacity to pay employees with advanced horticultural knowledge and skills sets. In this case, they would need to adapt how they reward their employees appropriately.

**How will the institution's internal capacity be strengthened as a result of your project?** TPI's ability to fulfill its mission begins internally. Our mission is to provide transformative learning experiences. Professional development of staff elevates their level of knowledge and skill proficiency giving them the opportunities to become the best versions of themselves. Providing transformative learning experiences for our staff helps all team members authentically create these experiences for our guests and community from daily interactions to event experiences and programming curriculum. Finally, the employee-determined goal for the year 2020 to be "welcoming to all" will be fulfilled from the perspective of welcoming to all staff.

**What data will you collect and report to measure your project's success?** We will engage in evaluative data collection during all three years of this project, using culturally responsive evaluation best practices. In year one, we will gather primarily qualitative information that will help us understand how to overcome potential cultural barriers and present content and a program that is relevant, culturally appropriate, and useful to the intended users. As we develop materials in year two and three, we will compare against this baseline data to maximize their effectiveness. Additionally, collecting scores on the end-of-module quizzes will shed light on strengths and weaknesses of the training. In year three we will collect summative evaluation data both to 1) qualitatively understand the experience of employees using, and not using, the training materials, and 2) quantitatively assess how frequently the material is being used. We will gauge our project's success by employees choosing to participate in the training, reporting a positive experience with it, and supervisors reporting increased skills among employees. We will report findings through formative reports to the design team and summative presentations to stakeholders and the museum and public garden communities.

**What tangible products will result from your project?** This project will result in a professional advancement plan with the nine areas of emphasis for horticultural proficiency. Each area will be accompanied by digital training videos which will be made available to all museums across America for the benefit of their organizations, horticultural cultivation and maintenance, and employee advancement efforts.

**How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project?** Developing TPI's HC&M team has long term benefits for our organization that will help sustain the benefits of increasing their professional pathways to success. Elevating our HC&M team will establish TPI as a center of horticultural excellence throughout Utah. We will capitalize on this expanded reputation by creating horticultural internship programs for the six state and private colleges and university horticultural programs and students. Increased confidence in maintaining our 56 acres of Ashton Garden galleries at a high horticultural standard will attract more guests as well as national garden conferences result in additional funding to support all organizational costs. TPI horticultural excellence also attracts more community volunteers interested in learning horticultural skill sets from working side by side with our HC&M teams.



