Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services' webinar, "Museums for America Grant Program Fiscal Year 2017 Information Session."

My name is Connie Bodner, and speaking on behalf of rest of the staff in the Office of Museum Services, we are delighted that you could join us today and that you are interested in preparing an application for the IMLS Museums for America grant program.

Pre-recorded Webinar

IMLS FY2017 Museum Funding Opportunities

https://www.imls.gov/news-events/events/imls-fy2017-museum-funding-opportunities
Choose the Blackboard Recording Link or the PDF of the transcript.

TOPICS COVERED
- IMLS vision, mission, and strategic plan
- IMLS funding programs and opportunities
- Eligibility requirements
- Registration requirements
- Learning more

If you have not viewed our pre-recorded introductory webinar about IMLS's funding opportunities, we strongly recommend that you do so at your earliest convenience. You can access it at any time by going to our website's News & Events page, choosing Events and Webinars, and then clicking on IMLS FY2017 Museum Funding Opportunities, which is the link shown here.

In that webinar, we discussed IMLS's vision, mission, and strategic plan which are at the core of our grant-making. You would be well-served to consider these in thinking about your project for which you will be seeking IMLS support.

We also introduced IMLS's funding programs and opportunities for museums, which include two technical assistance programs (MAP and CAP) and four grant programs.

We reviewed the eligibility requirements for each grant program.

We covered registration requirements—getting a DUNS number, and registering early with SAM.gov and Grants.gov.

And lastly, we encouraged potential applicants to view the webinar for each program to which they might want to apply. That brings us to today and the MFA webinar.

FY2016 Museums for America

	Number of Applications	Number of Awards	Funds Requested	Funds Awarded
Learning Experiences	220	78	$23,554,040	$8,640,802
Community Anchors	65	18	$8,573,862	$2,100,986
Collections Stewardship	263	110	$25,009,881	$10,407,212
TOTAL	548	206	$57,137,783	$21,149,000

Before we jump into the details, we are often asked about numbers of applications and funding success rates, and so here are the figures for the just completed FY2016 grant cycle. As you can see, with just over $21M available, we were able to fund 36% of the applications we received by number and 37% by dollar amount. That varies from year to year, but this is within the typical range.

Overview

1. MFA Program Goals
2. Characteristics of Successful MFA Projects
3. Important Dates
4. How Much and How Many?
5. Project Categories
6. Allowable/Unallowable Costs
7. Application Components
8. Application Tips
9. Review Process
10. Contacts

In this presentation, we'll be addressing the following topics:

- MFA Program Goals

- Characteristics of Successful MFA Projects

- Important Dates

- The questions of How much and How Many?

- Project Categories

- Allowable and Unallowable Costs

- Application Components

- Application Tips

- The Review Process

- IMLS Staff Contact Information

MFA Program Goals

MFA supports projects that strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public.

Let's begin with MFA's Program Goals. Museums for America is structured to support projects that strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public.

This might be through activities that reflect museums as active resources for **lifelong learning**, as important institutions in the establishment and maintenance **of livable communities**, or as **good stewards** of the nation's collections.

The key concepts here that distinguish MFA from other IMLS funding programs are that the focus is on an **individual museum, its particular community or public**, and **its collections**.

MFA is all about what your museum needs in order to better serve your public. It may well be exactly the same as what the museum across town or in a neighboring state needs, and that's ok. The important thing here is that our support help you make a local impact.

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Characteristics of Successful MFA Applications

- ***Institutional Impact:*** The project addresses a key need or challenge linked to a specific goal or objective identified in the museum's strategic plan.
- ***In-depth knowledge:*** The project design reflects a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.
- ***Project-based design:*** The work plan consists of a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge.
- ***Demonstrable results:*** The project generates measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

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With this focus on supporting the individual museum, what are the characteristics of successful Museums for America applications? There are four, and successful projects exemplify all of them well. As you prepare your application, then, you should keep these characteristics in mind.

FIRST, Institutional Impact: The project addresses a key need or challenge linked to a specific goal or objective identified in the museum's strategic plan.
SECOND, In-depth knowledge: The project design reflects a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.
THIRD, Project-based design: The work plan consists of a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge.
AND FOURTH, Demonstrable results: The project generates measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

It has been our experience that an unfunded application is one that has failed to deliver convincingly on one or more of these, so it is wise to think hard about how to structure your application to show how your project will be strong in each.

Important Dates

Applications are due by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on **December 1, 2016.**

Awards will be announced in **September, 2017.**

Projects must start **October 1, November 1, or December 1, 2017.**

We want to remind you of important dates for MFA applications. They are due by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on December 1, 2016. That is non-negotiable and the time stamp is auto-generated by the Grants.gov system. We will say this over and over again, but **start early** and **submit early.** That way, if you encounter a difficulty of any kind when submitting your proposal, you'll have some time to resolve the problem.

MFA awards will be announced in September, 2017.

And MFA projects must be scheduled to start on the first day of October, November, or December, 2017. The choice is yours.

How much and how many?

HOW MUCH?

Option 1: $5,000-$25,000 with **no cost share permitted**

Option 2: $25,001-$500,000 with 1:1 cost share required

HOW MANY?

If you choose **Option 1**, you are limited to **one** application in the FY2017 MFA grant program.

If you choose **Option 2**, there is no limit on the number of applications your museum may submit to MFA.

Our next topic has to do with how much funding may you request and how many applications are you allowed to submit. These are important questions.

Turning first to how much money may you request. There are two options again this year. Option 1 is to apply for an amount between $5,000 and $25,000. If you elect Option 1, then you do not need to provide a cost share, and in fact, you may NOT provide a cost share. When we say no cost share is permitted, we mean that your application will be removed from consideration if you provide one. That's major, so let me say it again. If you apply for $25,000 or less, **DO NOT INCLUDE A COST SHARE IN YOUR BUDGET OR REFERENCE ONE IN YOUR PROJECT.**

Option 2 is to apply for an amount between $25,001 and the maximum $500,000. If you elect Option 2, then you must provide a 1:1 cost share. This cost share may be in the form of cash, staff or volunteer time, or third-party contributions. It may not be funds from another federal source.

The second question is how many applications may you file? If you choose Option 1 and request between $5,000 and $25,000 with no cost share, then you are limited to one MFA application in the FY2017 round.

If you choose Option 2 and request between $25,001 and $500,000 with a 1:1 cost share, then there is no limit on the number of applications your museum may submit this round to MFA.

MFA Project Categories

Three IMLS programmatic strategic goals define MFA project categories. You will choose one for your project.

Learning Experiences: IMLS supports the unique ability of museums to open the door to meaningful knowledge and enhanced inquiry skills for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Community Anchors: IMLS promotes the role of museums as essential partners in addressing the needs of their communities by leveraging their expertise, knowledge, physical space, technology, and other resources to identify and implement solutions.

Collections Stewardship: IMLS supports the exemplary management, care, and conservation of, as well as broad access to and use of museum collections.

Our next topic is that of MFA Project Categories. Second to choosing to apply to Museums for America, this is likely to be your most important decision about your funding application.

Much like your own institution's strategic plan, ours identifies goals that help us achieve our vision and accomplish our mission. What is most important to you as a potential applicant is that there are three programmatic goals that drive our grant-making. We require applicants for Museums for America to align their projects with one of these goals.

Goal 1, abbreviated as "Learning Experiences," makes it clear that IMLS supports the unique ability of museums to open the door to meaningful knowledge and enhanced inquiry skills for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Goal 2, "Community Anchors," specifies that IMLS promotes the role of museums as essential partners in addressing the needs of their communities by leveraging their expertise, knowledge, physical space, technology, and other resources to identify and implement solutions.

And Goal 3, "Collections Stewardship," confirms that IMLS supports the exemplary management, care, and conservation of, as well as broad access to and use of museum collections.

Why is your decision about which category to choose so important? For one thing, your application will be reviewed by museum professionals who have experience and expertise in these general categories. And for another, your application will be competing against

others who have chosen the same category. In short, the entire review process incorporates an assumption that your project aligns with the category you've identified.

Project Categories:
Learning Experiences

MFA Learning Experiences projects might include:

- Interpretive and educational programs
- Exhibition development, design, and fabrication
- Digital media
- Public programs
- Digitization activities designed to provide greater access and stimulate engagement for audiences with different learning styles
- Professional development for educators
- Publication of curriculum-support materials
- Visitor studies that help guide the design and development or reassessment and realignment of current educational programs
- Training for staff, volunteers, and interns
- Learning partnerships with schools and development of museum resources and programs in support of school curricula

Successful projects provide high-quality, inclusive educational opportunities that address particular audience needs.

So let's take a look at what kinds of activities a project in each of these categories might include.

An MFA Learning Experiences project might include:

- Interpretive and educational programs
- Exhibition development, design, and fabrication
- Digital media
- Public programs
- Digitization activities designed to provide greater access and stimulate engagement for audiences with different learning styles
- Professional development for educators
- Publication of curriculum-support materials
- Visitor studies that help guide the design and development or reassessment and realignment of current educational programs
- Training for staff, volunteers, and interns
- Learning partnerships with schools and development of museum resources and programs in support of school curricula

Ideally, these and related activities will place the learner at the center and contribute to the creation of engaging learning experiences for their targeted audiences. In fact, as you plan your project in this category, we strongly recommend starting with the concept of "learner

at the center" and build around it. And relatedly, spend time really thinking through who your targeted audience for this project is and what their needs are. We suspect this will make putting your proposal together much easier and you'll end up with a better product.

**Project Categories:
Community Anchors**

MFA Community Anchors projects might include:

- Creating environments for community learning, debate, and dialogue
- Community-driven and co-created exhibitions, programs, and events
- Audience development and community outreach
- Community-focused planning activities
- Audience-focused studies and evaluation
- Training for staff, volunteers, and interns in proactive and sustained community outreach and engagement strategies

Successful projects strive to create a better quality of life within communities.

A Community Anchors project is likely to include activities that contribute directly to the institution's functioning as an essential partner in addressing community needs.

- Creating environments for community learning, debate, and dialogue;
- Community-driven and co-created exhibitions, programs, and events;
- Audience development and community outreach;
- Community-focused planning activities;
- Audience-focused studies and evaluation; and
- Training for staff, volunteers, and interns in proactive and sustained community outreach and engagement strategies.

If your project involves exhibitions/programs, how do you know if your project fits best within Learning Experiences or Community Anchors? We suggest this test: If the motivation for doing the project comes from within your institution—perhaps your vision or your mission directs you to create these things—then you might well be looking at a Learning Experiences project. If the motivation for doing the project comes from outside your institution and in your community and you "raise your hand" to say, in essence, "Our resources, our position, our skills, etc. put us in a great position to address this need. We can make a difference and be part of the overall solution," then you might have a Community Anchors project.

Ultimately, it's your choice. We encourage you to choose one and write your application that way. Hybrids don't work as well as sharply focused applications.

**Project Categories:
Collections Stewardship**

MFA Collections Stewardship projects might include:

- Planning for collections management, care, and conservation
- Cataloguing, inventorying, documenting, and registration
- Developing and enhancing collections databases to improve collections management and/or to facilitate access and discovery
- Digitization activities including creating digital tools and platforms that broaden access to and expand use of the museum's collection
- Conservation surveys and treatments
- Rehousing collections
  - Environmental improvements for collections storage/exhibit areas
  - Training of staff, volunteers and interns in collections management, care, conservation, and in using technology to broaden access and expand use of collections

Successful projects contribute to the long-term preservation of , increased access to , and expanded use of materials entrusted to the museum's care.

Our third category is that of Collections Stewardship. An MFA project in Collections Stewardship might include:

- Planning for collections management, care, and conservation
- Cataloguing, inventorying, documenting, and registration
- Developing and enhancing collections databases to improve collections management and/or to facilitate access and discovery
- Digitization activities including creating digital tools and platforms that broaden access to and expand use of the museum's collection
- Conservation surveys and treatments
- Rehousing collections
- Environmental improvements for collections storage/exhibit areas
- Training of staff, volunteers and interns in collections management, care, conservation, and in using technology to broaden access and expand use of collections

Individually and in the aggregate, these activities help your museum deliver on exemplary stewardship of the collections entrusted to your care.

It's important to note that in this project category, we encourage a step-by-step, progressive approach to collections work, including conservation. This approach revolves around assessing needs, creating a prioritized list of activities, and following through by **doing the most important things first.**

Keep in mind that just as learners are in the center of Learning Experiences projects and the community plays the central role in Community Anchors projects, Collections Stewardship projects place the collections in the spotlight. The improvement that comes about as the result of your project should directly involve them.

Choosing a Project Category

Learning Experiences   Community Anchors   Collections Stewardship

TRY THESE:

1. Think carefully about what is "in the center" of your project. Who or what will benefit from your work? What will be improved once you've finished your project?

2. Decide who you want to review your application. What kind of skill set and experience do you want them to have?

3. List all the activities you plan to carry out, and assign each to a category. Which category gets the most? Where will most of the resources be spent?

Before we close our discussion of Project Categories, we want to mention our guidance for projects that could belong logically in more than one. Sometimes it's tough to choose, and you might be tempted to think that the best strategy would be to align with more than one—two, and maybe even three! We advise against that for several reasons.

First, the project categories have different goals, and we expect that projects aligned with each will address different problems, use different approaches, and will measure success in achieving the intended results in different ways. Second, not only do our instructions for writing the narrative and identifying conditionally required and supporting documents differ for each category, but so does our guidance for reviewers. In other words, we've gone to considerable effort to make distinctions among these three categories, and it's better if you do too.

So you know what you want to do, and you know that your museum is a place where people learn, that it is sharply focused on serving your community, and that you are committed to professionally managing and taking care of your collections. Practically speaking, how can you make the best choice for your project?

Here are three things we suggest you try. **Think carefully about what is "in the center" of your project.** Is it the learner? Will people who engage with you as a result of your project to create a new exhibition and programming to go with it acquire new knowledge, develop a skill, experience a change in attitude about the subject of your exhibit? Then you might have a Learning Experiences project. Or is it the community that's in the center of your

thinking? Is your project one that will address an important community need, and are you doing it because you believe your resources can be harnessed to make a difference? If the answers are yes, then you should think seriously about applying in the Community Anchors category. Or is your project about the collections? Does the immediate problem you're trying to address focus on the collections? Will your project result in a better managed, better cared-for set of objects? Then you may well be most comfortable proceeding with writing your application for submission in the Collections Stewardship category. A quick check might be to ask "What will be better off—learners, the community, or the collections?" They're all good answers. You just need to figure out which one is the best for this particular project.

A second way to go at this might be to think about **who you want to review your application.** If you apply under Learning Experiences, we will put it in front of educators, learning theorists, and professionals with deep experience in understanding how people learn in museum environments. Would you rather we put it in front of a a combination of experts in community engagement, audience development, audience research and evaluation, and public programs? If that sounds "right," then it may push you toward Community Anchors. And if you apply under Collections Stewardship, you can be confident that your application will be reviewed by some combination of registrars, collection managers, curators, conservators, or collections information specialists.

Still undecided? A third strategy to try might be to **make a list of all the activities** you plan to carry out. Then assign each to a category, and then count to see where MOST of these activities occur and where most the time and money will be spent. That might well provide your answer.

Our most heartfelt advice, then, is to choose one project category, study the instructions for preparing an application as well as the review criteria for that category, and write your proposal accordingly. As always, if you have questions, call the IMLS staff to discuss them.

We have posted the abstract, narrative, and schedule of completion for a cross-section of successful MFA applications from 2016, with representatives of each project category and both funding levels. Looking at these exemplary proposals might help clarify your thinking about your own.

We'll turn now to allowable and unallowable costs for your project. Be very careful in preparing your proposal and include only allowable costs in both your IMLS ask and your cost share. To do otherwise can hurt your chances of getting positive reviews and being recommended for funding.

We'll go through some common expenses that are allowable and unallowable, but for details, please see Title 2, Subtitle A, Chapter II, Part 200 of the Code of Federal Regulations covering Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, or "2 CFR 200" for short. Made effective on December 26, 2014, this set of rules combines and simplifies previous sets of rules known as the OMB Circulars, and to which we referred applicants for IMLS grants in the past.

Fortunately, the regulations are available online in a searchable format on the U.S. Government Publishing Office website listed on the screen or thanks to TinyURL, at **http://tinyurl.com/nxawgds.**

Of particular interest may be Subpart E—Cost Principles, a small section of which is shown on the right side of the screen.

Allowable Costs

Examples of allowable costs

- personnel salaries, wages, and fringe benefits
- travel expenses for key project staff and consultants
- materials, supplies, software, and equipment related directly to project activities
- equipment to improve collections storage and exhibit environments
- third-party costs
- publication design and printing
- staff and volunteer training
- internships/fellowships
- indirect or overhead costs

In the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity, we provide a partial list of the most common examples of allowable costs. These include:

- personnel salaries, wages, and fringe benefits
- travel expenses for key project staff and consultants
- materials, supplies, software, and equipment related directly to project activities
- equipment to improve collections storage and exhibit environments
- third-party costs
- publication design and printing
- staff and volunteer training
- internships/fellowships
- indirect or overhead costs

So, these costs may be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for and/or what you will pay for as part of your cost share, if one is required.

Unallowable Costs

Examples of unallowable costs

- general fundraising costs, such as development office staff or other staff time devoted to general fundraising
- contributions to endowments
- general operating support
- acquisition of collections
- general advertising or public relations costs designed solely for promotional activities other than those related to the specific project
- construction expenses
- reconstruction or renovation of historic sites
- social activities, ceremonies, receptions, or entertainment
- research projects (see 2 C.F.R. § 200.87)
- pre-award costs

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- construction expenses
- reconstruction or renovation of historic sites
- social activities, ceremonies, receptions, or entertainment
- research projects (see 2 C.F.R. § 200.87)
- pre-award costs

So, these costs may NOT be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for, NOR can they be part of what you will pay for as part of your cost share, if one is required. In fact, unallowable expenses can't show up anywhere in your proposal.

As you prepare your application, it's a good idea to compare your list of proposed expenses against these lists of allowable and unallowable costs and against the appropriate set of cost principles. If after that you have specific questions, please contact us and we'll be happy to help.

Application Components

Required Documents
All applications must include these. Omission of one results in exclusion from further consideration.

Conditionally Required Documents
Some applications must include these. Omission of one results in exclusion from further consideration.

Supporting Documents
These are **optional**. Make good decisions, and include only those that supplement the narrative and support the project description provided in the application.

Next up are application components. As you will see in Grants.gov, if you haven't already, you will upload a series of documents that together make up your application.

These application components fall into three categories in Museums for America. The first is that of **Required Documents**. **All applications must include these.** Omission of even just one can result in the exclusion of your application from further consideration.

The second group is that of **Conditionally Required Documents**. **Some** applications must include these. It might depend on the nature of your institution or some aspect of your project. In either case, omission of even just one can result in the exclusion of your application from further consideration.

The third group of application components are **Supporting Documents**. These are completely optional. You may submit some or none. We strongly recommend, however, that you make good decisions here and include only those that supplement the narrative and support the project description you provide in your application. This is not the place to introduce new information. We also recommend that you be respectful of your reviewers' time and avoid any temptation to include hundreds of pages of extraneous material that is not directly relevant to your project. Being judicious really does work to your benefit. **Include what is important and helpful and stop there.**

Table of Application Components

Use the table to keep organized.

- Serves as a checklist of application components
- Identifies document formats and naming conventions
- Provides links to instructions and forms
- Identifies categories of documents (Required, Conditionally Required, Supporting)

a. Table of Application Components

Component	Format	File name to use
Required Documents		
The Application for Federal Assistance/Short Organizational Form (SF-424S)	Grants.gov form	n/a
Abstract (one page max.)	PDF document	Abstract.pdf
IMLS Program Information Sheet	IMLS PDF form	Programinfo.pdf
Organizational Profile (one page max.)	PDF document	Organizationalprofile.pdf
Strategic Plan Summary (two pages max.)	PDF document	Strategicplan.pdf
Narrative (seven pages max.)	PDF document	Narrative.pdf
Schedule of Completion (one page per year max.)	PDF document	Scheduleofcompletion.pdf
IMLS Budget Form	IMLS PDF form	Budget.pdf
Budget Justification	PDF document	Budgetjustification.pdf
List of Key Project Staff and Consultants (one page max.)	PDF document	Projectstaff.pdf
Resumes of Key Project Staff and Consultants that appear on the list above (two pages each max.)	PDF document	Resumes.pdf
Conditionally Required Documents		
Proof of Nonprofit Status	PDF document	Proofnonprofit.pdf

In the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity is a Table of Application Components. We recommend that you use this to keep yourself organized. It serves as a checklist of application components. The middle column tells you what formats and the third tells you how to name each document so that you may upload your application to Grants.gov successfully.

It also provides links to instructions and forms, and it tells you which documents are required, conditionally required, and supporting.

SF-424S:Application for Federal Domestic Assistance - Short Organizational Form

Now we're going to look at some of the forms that are required for your application, and we'll focus on those areas that seem to be the most challenging for applicants. The first form we'll consider is the SF 424S, or the Application for Federal Domestic Assistance, Short Organizational Form. This is a Required Document, and the form is downloaded as part of the Grants.gov package. It is not available from the IMLS website.

There are four important things to watch for on this page:

The **Legal Name** ties to Program Information Sheet, which we'll get to in a few minutes, and these entries should match. It is the name to which your DUNS number is officially tied.

The **Organizational DUNS number** is important in confirming your eligibility, identity, and tax-exempt status. It must link to the Legal Name.

The **Project Title** will track with your project throughout its lifespan. Create a good one that accurately represents your project.

And at the bottom of the page is space for a **Project Description.** This is important for at least two reasons:

1. We use this for several purposes during the review process, and if you're funded, it can be the basis for the representation of your project that goes on our website and to the media. Write your project description to address **what you plan to do**, **for whom**, and for **what purpose**. Be sure to list your major activities and your intended results. Don't

waste characters on telling us this is an MFA application, how much you're asking for, or the history of your organization. **Consider making this the last piece you write so that it is as concise and accurate as possible**.

2. There is a character limit that you won't encounter until the moment you press the **SUBMIT** button. Your entire application might be rejected by Grants.gov if you exceed the limit. You'll get an immediate message to that effect, but if you're minutes away from the deadline, you might not have time to rewrite it. Our experience is that 150 words is close to the maximum limit, but don't take our word for it. File early to be safe.

Page 2 of the SF-424S is about the Project Director and the Primary Contact/Grants Administrator. The Project Director should be the person who is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the project—in short for making sure the project gets done. The Primary Contact might be someone in the grants office or someone whose role is more purely administrative. Important to remember here is that in many cases these two positions may be the same person. They don't have to be, but they **may** be.

HOWEVER…

The Authorizing Official, also known as the Authorized Representative, MUST be different from the Project Director. This is the person who has the authority and the responsibility for certifying that statements made in the application are true, complete, and accurate and that the organization will comply with all necessary certifications, assurances, and terms if an award is made. This might be the President/CEO, Director, Board President, or other position of authority within the institution. **It cannot be the Project Director, however.**

So to recap: The Project Director and the Primary Contact can be the same person, but the Project Director and the Authorizing Official cannot be the same person. We must have two different individuals named for these three roles.

Let's turn now to the Program Information Sheet, which is an IMLS form downloadable from our website. This is a five-page document that is VERY important to your application. The Notice of Funding Opportunity provides complete instructions for how to fill out this form, but we want to highlight a couple of especially important things for you here. **MAKE SURE THE PROGRAM INFORMATION SHEET YOU DOWNLOAD LOOKS LIKE THIS ONE and has a 7/31/2018 expiration date.** We made very important changes made this year, and you want to be sure you aren't using an old version that is cached on your machine or left over from a previous application.

In #1a on page 1, you'll see "Legal Name." This must be the same as the "Legal Name" you provided on the SF-424S, and again, it must link to the DUNS number for your organization.

Below that in #1c, we ask about your SAM.gov registration. You MUST have a SAM.gov registration, and it MUST be active. We recommend that you check this immediately. If you haven't registered yet, start the process now because it can take several weeks. If you need to renew, start that process now too because it also can take several weeks. Please remember: Your SAM.gov registration must be active throughout the grant review period, at the time awards are made, and throughout the lifespan of your grant. Without it, we cannot accept your application, review it, make an award, or provide you money.

In #1d and e, we ask you to record your Organizational Unit if that is different from the Legal Name of the applicant and its address. When might that be the case? In order to be eligible for an MFA award, you must qualify as a museum. In our Notice of Funding

Opportunity and in our pre-recorded webinar, we outline exactly what that means. In some cases, the Legal Name entity might be something other than a museum—such as a university. On its own, it would not be eligible to apply for an MFA grant. However, that entity might administer an Organizational Unit that DOES qualify. In our example of a university, a campus natural history museum might meet the eligibility requirements and the **pairing** could therefore apply for funding. In that case, you would enter the university's name as the Legal Applicant and the museum name as the Organizational Unit.

If you have questions about your own situation, spend some time with the eligibility requirements for Museums for America, and then call us if you need help in interpreting them.

Program Information Sheet

Financial Information

On page 2, we ask questions about your organization's finances—total revenue and expenses for three fiscal years; budget surplus or deficit greater than 10% of your annual operating budget; and any material weakness identified in your prior year's audit report. If you are applying using an **Organizational Unit** designation, then these questions apply to the Organizational Unit, rather than to the Legal Name entity. If you're the museum that's run by a university, we want to know about the museum budget, not that of the entire university.

Program Information Sheet

(a) Grant Program
(b) Project Category
(c) Funding Level
(d) Performance Goal
(e) Performance Measure Statements (https://www.imls.gov/nofo/museums-america-fy17-notice-funding-opportunity#doclet-412)
(f) IMLS Funds Requested and Cost Share

On page 3, we ask a series of questions that will determine how your application is categorized for review.

If you're applying for Museums for America, you will check #3d for Grant Program. Then immediately below that, you'll identify the project category—Learning Experiences, Community Anchors, or Collections Stewardship—you have selected for your application. Important to know here is that the selection you make determines the group in which your proposal will be reviewed. We won't second-guess you on this, so you should choose wisely.

Below that is the opportunity to select a funding level. As we discussed earlier, Option 1 is $5,000 to $25,000 with no cost share **permitted**. Option 2 is $25,001 to $500,000 with a 1:1 cost share requirement.

As a reminder: The phrase "no applicant cost share permitted" means that if you provide one, we will be forced to eliminate your application from consideration. This funding option is truly meant for projects whose entirety is $25,000 or less. It is NOT for $25,000 contribution to a larger effort. If you provide a cost share, then we have to conclude that your project is more than $25,000 and thus not appropriate. It's worth saying one more time: If you apply for the $5,000-$25,000 funding level, **DO NOT INCLUDE A COST SHARE.**

REMEMBER: If you choose Option 1, you are limited to one application in the FY2017 MFA grant program. If you choose Option 2, there is no limit on the number of applications your

museum may submit to MFA.

The question in #4 is worth spending a few minutes discussing. As part of the government-wide grant reform measures that were implemented in December of 2014, we are asking you to select one or more performance goals that align with our agency-level goals. You'll begin by making the same choice—Learning, Community, or Collections (i.e. Content and Collections) that you made in #3d. Next, choose one or more of the pre-determined performance goals beneath it. Confine your choice to the options listed for the agency-level goal you've chosen. For example, if your project will address Learning, then choose "Train and develop museum and library professionals," "Support communities of practice," and/or "Develop and provide inclusive and accessible learning opportunities." If yours is a Community Anchors project, then you only have one choice—"Strengthen museums and libraries as essential partners in addressing the needs of their communities." If you are proposing a Collections project, then choose "Broaden access and expand use of the Nation's content and collections," "Improve management of the Nation's content and collections," and/or "Improve preservation, conservation, and care of the Nation's content and collections."

One more important element is that of choosing performance measure statements. If you are proposing a Learning or a Community project, then visit the web page shown in the slide (https://www.imls.gov/nofo/museums-america-fy17-notice-funding-opportunity#doclet-412) to view a list of pre-determined performance measure statements that will help IMLS document the collective achievements of the Learning and Community projects we fund.

Performance Measure Statements

Performance Measure Statements and Information to be Collected and Reported for Learning and Community Projects

On the Program Information Sheet, you selected an IMLS agency-level goal of Learning or Community with which your project best aligns, and you selected at least one performance goal that reflects a measurable change or outcome that you intend for your project to achieve.

Below is a list of pre-determined performance measure statements that will help IMLS document the collective achievements of the Learning and Community projects we fund.

IMPORTANT: You will be required to provide specific information directly relating to these performance measure statement(s) in your Final Performance Report. You may design and administer a more elaborate survey than what will be required to gather this specific information. These information-gathering activities must be incorporated into your application narrative, your work plan, your schedule of completion, and your budget, as necessary.

IMLS Agency-Level Goal 1: Learning

Performance Goal	Performance Measure Statement	Information You Will Be Expected to Report
	Survey Respondent: Program/Project Participants	Data to be Collected
	My understanding has increased as a result of this program/training: Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree, nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree	• Number of participants • Number of total responses • Number of responses per answer option • Number of non-responses
Train and develop museum and library professionals	My interest in this subject has increased as a result of this program/training: Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree, nor Disagree Disagree	• Number of participants • Number of total responses • Number of responses per answer option • Number of non-responses

The link will take you to this page of our website. You'll see here that you will be required to provide specific data directly relating to these performance measure statement(s) in your Final Performance Report. Now, while you won't be writing that Final Performance Report until at least 15 months from the time you get your award, you **will** need to administer surveys to get responses from your program or project participants, your staff, or your community partners, depending on the nature of your project.

It stands to reason then that you will need to set aside time and resources in your project to collect and analyze this information, so we expect you to incorporate it into your application narrative, your work plan, your schedule of completion, and your budget.

If you have questions about this requirement, please don't hesitate to contact an IMLS staff member. We'll be happy to discuss it with you and how it will impact your particular project.

Program Information Sheet

(f) IMLS Funds Requested and Cost Share

Returning now to page 3 of the Program Information Sheet, there is one more question to which we want to direct your attention.

In #5a, we ask you to tell us how many dollars you are requesting from IMLS, and in #5b, we ask you to record your cost share. **Make sure these amounts reflect what's in your budget.** Sometimes people skip these blocks because they intend to fill them in later but forget, or they record preliminary numbers that change by the time they finish the application. Please double check them.

Program Information Sheet

On page 4, we draw your attention to #7, Museum Profile. This is for Museum Applicants Only, and of course this applies to you if you're applying to Museums for America. This is where you provide the information we need to verify your **eligibility** for MFA funding. We need answers for each question, **a** through **m**, so don't skip any. To do so could result in your institution's being found ineligible.

Program Information Sheet

(a) Project Category

(b) Primary Element (choose one)

(c) Collections Projects Only (choose as many as you need)

On page 5, #8 is all about helping us identify the expertise and experience needed to review your project.

Begin by finding the project category that you selected in Question 3—Learning Experiences, Community Anchors, or Collections Stewardship. Beneath each of these headings is a list of primary elements for that project category. Select the ONE that you consider core to your proposed project. **To recap, you'll check one and only one primary element for your proposal.**

In addition, if your project involves collections, then we ask you to identify the material type or types that will be affected by your project. You may select as many material types as you feel appropriate here.

Strategic Plan Summary

- Summary should be no more than two pages long
- Focus: Helps connect your proposed project's activities to your institutional goals and objectives
- Shows date and by whom the plan was approved

Now that we've covered some (although not all) of the forms required for an MFA application, we want to turn to three specific documents that you will need to prepare. Please be aware that these are not ALL the documents you will need to submit, but they are very important ones and the ones about which applicants seem to have the most questions.

First is a **strategic plan summary**. As you read the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity, you will see frequent references to your organization's strategic plan or strategic goals. IMLS wants to help you achieve your goals, and indeed, one of the characteristics of a successful MFA project is that it addresses a key need or challenge that faces your museum and is identified in your strategic plan. We ask for a summary of your plan—no more than two pages—so that reviewers will be able to understand how your proposed project's activities will further your institutional goals and objectives. To verify its legitimacy, we ask that you indicate when and by whom the plan was approved. For some institutions this might be the Board of Trustees. For others it might be someone or a group representing the authority for a division or a department.

Inside advice: Use a narrative format for your strategic plan summary. Although infographics and cleverly designed imagery might be just the thing for communicating your strategic plan to some audiences, it typically doesn't work well for our reviewers. **Use words.**

Now let's talk about the narrative of your proposal. You have seven pages to cover three very important issues.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

In this section of the narrative, you should lay out the reasoning for your project. Tell us in the clearest terms possible what you propose to do; what need, problem, or challenge you expect to address; how you identified it; who or what will benefit from your work; how your project will advance your institution's strategic plan; and how your project will address the goals of MFA and the project category you have chosen.

Remember that core to the Museums for America program is the desire to support projects that strengthen your ability to serve your public and that your strategic plan is the foundation for MFA project proposals. Show the reviewers how this all fits together.

Reviewers will evaluate your proposal on how well you explain your project; if it's a Collections project, they'll want to see a clear description and quantification of the collections and/or records that will be the focus of your project. They'll consider how well you've defended the need, problem, or challenge you will address; how well you've identified who or what will benefit from the project, and if this involves an audience of some kind, how good of a job you've done in involving them in the planning. They'll look for a strong link between your project and your institution's strategic plan; and they'll look at how well your project aligns with MFA and the project category you have chosen.

Narrative: Project Work Plan

Tell us:

- What specific activities, including evaluation and performance measurements, will you carry out?

- What are the risks to the project and how are they accounted for?

- Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

- When and in what sequence will your activities occur?

- What resources will you need to carry out the activities?

- How will you track your progress?

- How and with whom will you share your project's results?

Reviewers will look for:

- *Activities informed by appropriate theory and practice*

- *Goals, assumptions, and risks clearly stated*

- *Appropriate evaluation activities and performance measurements*

- *Team with sufficient experience and skills*

- *Realistic and achievable schedule*

- *Appropriate time, personnel, and financial resources*

- *Clear methodology for tracking progress and adjusting course when necessary*

- *Effective plan for communicating results and/or sharing discoveries*

PROJECT WORK PLAN

The Project Work Plan is the part of the narrative in which you relay who will do what, when, and using what resources.

We ask you to tell us what specific activities you will undertake; what are the risks to the project and how are they accounted for in your work plan; who will plan, implement, and manage your project; when and in what sequence your activities will occur; what financial, personnel, and other resources you will need to carry out the activities; how you will track progress toward achieving your performance goals and intended results; and how and with whom you will share your project's results.

Reviewers will weigh in on how well they think you've taken into account appropriate theory and practice; whether your goals, assumptions, and risks are clearly stated; whether your evaluation activities and performance measurements are appropriate; whether the team you've put together has the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully; and whether your schedule of work is realistic and achievable. They'll also be looking at whether the time, personnel, and financial resources identified are appropriate for the scope and scale of the project. They will look at whether your methodology for tracking progress will give you what you need to adjust course when necessary. And last but not least, they'll register how effective they think your plan for communicating results and/or sharing discoveries will be.

Tell us:

- *Learning and Community:* How will you collect and report the data required for the performance measure statement(s) you have chosen?

- *Collections Stewardship:* How will the care, condition, management , access to, or use of museum collections/records be improved?

- What are your intended results that will address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified?

- What do you expect to change and among whom?

- What tangible products will result?

- How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project?

Reviewers will look for:

- *Learning and Community: Well designed and feasible plan for collecting and reporting data*

- *Collections Stewardship: Improvement in the care, condition, management, access to, or use of museum collections/records*

- *A solidly grounded and appropriately structured plan to effect meaningful change*

- *Useful tangible products*

- *Reasonable and practical plan for sustaining the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of the grant*

PROJECT RESULTS

The third section of your narrative should be devoted to articulating your project's intended results.

For Learning Experiences and Community Anchors projects, tell us how you will collect and report the data required for the performance measure statements you have chosen. For Collections Stewardship projects, tell us in quantitative terms how the care, condition, management, access to, or use of your museum collections or records will be improved. Essentially, you will create your own performance measure statements.

What specific results do you intend to achieve in your project? **Something will get better.** The need or problem should be diminished or eliminated altogether. Tell us how that will be so.

Tell us about the tangible products that will result from your project, if you have any, and last but not least, tell us how you will sustain the benefits of your project beyond the lifespan of this particular project? In other words, when the federal funding goes away, how will the goodness that you've created be sustained?

Reviewers will give us their opinions on your plan for collecting and reporting data; they'll

register their thoughts about how likely it is you will deliver on the improvements that you've proposed; how useful the tangible products you plan to create will be; and whether your plan for sustaining the benefits of the project are reasonable and practical.

So, to recap: Your narrative has three sections—Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results. They're all equally important, so don't give any of them short shrift. Write clearly, address what we ask you to address, and keep an eye on those review criteria. We're telling you here exactly what the reviewers will look for, so make it easy for them to find it and understand it.

IMLS Budget Form

At this point, we move on to the IMLS Budget Form. This is a single fillable PDF document that is four pages long and that you download from our website. You'll use it whether your project is 1, 2, or 3 years in duration. The Notice of Funding Opportunity contains detailed instructions for what to include where. The form adds for you automatically, although there are still some calculations you'll need to do on your own to get the numbers you need to plug into the form. We urge you to check your figures very carefully, making sure that expenses that will be paid from IMLS funds as well as those that you will cover as part of your cost share are in the right categories, are justifiable in the context of your project, and, of course, represent allowable costs.

It's very important to make sure you have **this** version of the form, and not a cached one, as there are some important changes over previous years.

Budget Justification

- Address each purpose for each expense in the budget—both the IMLS ask and the cost share, if required.
- Explain the basis or method of cost computation used to determine each dollar amount.
  - 6 cabinets at $1,550 each = $9,300.
  - Jane Doe, contract conservator, will visit two times to advise on rehousing materials and train staff in mount making. Two trips, 3 days each, at $500/day = $3,000.
  - Fringe benefits for new hire, one year, 32% of $42,000 = $13,440.
- Itemize and explain any costs that you consolidated and summarized on the IMLS Budget Form.
- Follow the format of the IMLS Budget form section headings.
- DO NOT use the Budget Justification to detail staff qualifications or to justify your project.

In addition to the IMLS Budget Form, you will need to write a Budget Justification. This is a separate document and a very important part of your application. Peer reviewers will use it to evaluate the appropriateness of the financial resources you have identified as necessary for your project, and IMLS staff will use it to check your calculations and make determinations regarding the allowability of specific expenses according to the applicable cost principles. The Notice of Funding Opportunity includes "How to Write Your Budget Justification," and we strongly recommend you follow it. You may use as many pages as necessary to fully justify your budget.

Your Budget Justification should:

- Address each purpose for each expense in the budget—both the IMLS ask and the cost share, if required.
- Explain the basis or method of cost computation used to determine each dollar amount.
  - 6 cabinets at $1,550 each = $9,300.
  - Jane Doe, contract conservator, will visit two times to advise on rehousing materials and train staff in mount making. Two trips, 3 days each, at $500/day = $3,000.
  - Fringe benefits for new hire, 32% of $42,000 = $13,440.
- Itemize and explain any costs that you consolidated and summarized on the IMLS Budget Form.
- Follow the format of the IMLS Budget form section headings.

- DO NOT use the Budget Justification to detail staff qualifications or to justify your project. There are other places for that!

Indirect Costs

IMLS BUDGET FORM

9. Indirect Costs (Read the instructions about Indirect Costs before completing this section.)

- Current indirect cost rate(s) have been negotiated with a federal agency. Name of Agency: ___ Expiration Date: ___
- Indirect cost proposal has been submitted to a federal agency but not yet finalized. Name of Agency: ___ Proposal Date: ___
- Applicant chooses a rate not to exceed 10% of modified total direct costs, and declares it is eligible for the 10% rate.
- Applicant chooses not to include indirect costs.

1. Use a current indirect cost rate that you have negotiated with a federal agency.
2. Use an indirect cost rate proposed to a federal agency but is not yet finalized.
3. Use a rate not to exceed 10% of **modified total direct costs** (MTDC) if you have never had a federally negotiated indirect cost rate and you are not subject to other requirements, such as those in place for states, local governments, and Indian tribes.
4. Not include indirect costs at all in your budget.

- MTDC **includes** direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, supplies and materials, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward.
- MTDC **does not include** equipment, rental costs, tuition remission/scholarships/ fellowships, participant support costs, the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000, or indirect cost type items.

Returning to the IMLS Budget Form again, one aspect of budget preparation that we get lots of questions about is that of Indirect Costs. Please notice that you have four options for calculating Indirect Costs, which are explained in detail in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. You may:

1. Use a current indirect cost rate that you have negotiated with a federal agency.
2. Use an indirect cost rate proposed to a federal agency but not yet finalized.
3. Use a rate not to exceed 10% of modified total direct costs if you have never had a federally negotiated indirect cost rate and you are not subject to other requirements, such as those in place for states, local governments, and Indian tribes.
4. Not include indirect costs at all in your budget

If you are using the 10% indirect cost rate, it is important to understand what the modified total direct costs are.

Modified total direct costs include
- Direct Salaries and Wages
- Applicable Fringe Benefits
- Supplies and Materials
- Travel
- Up to the first $25,000 of each subaward

They do NOT include:

- Equipment
- Rental Costs
- Tuition Remission, Scholarships, Fellowships
- Participant Support Costs
- The portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000
- Indirect-cost-type items (e.g. general telephone service, postage, office supplies and office space expenses, and administrative or financial operations for your entire organization)

Digital Product Form

The last form we'll talk about today is the Digital Product Form. If your project includes creating a digital product of any kind—digital collections, web resources, metadata, software, or a digital dataset—you should complete and submit the Digital Product Form. It is available on our website as both a fillable PDF and a Word document; the choice of which to use is yours. This form makes it easy for reviewers and for IMLS to understand how you will create your digital products and how you will make them available for use and re-use by others.

Because technology is dynamic and because we do not want to inhibit innovation, we do not want to prescribe set standards and best practices that would certainly become quickly outdated. Instead, we ask a series of questions about your digital product project, and your answers will be used by IMLS staff and by peer reviewers to evaluate your proposal. You need to complete the sections that align best with your project.

There are many resources available for digitization projects these days. You may find the Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines helpful at www.digitizationguidelines.gov.

Application Tips

Check your registrations, user names, and passwords.

1. D-U-N-S® Number: **www.dnb.com/us**

2. SAM Registration: **www.sam.gov**

3. Grants.gov Registration: **www.grants.gov**
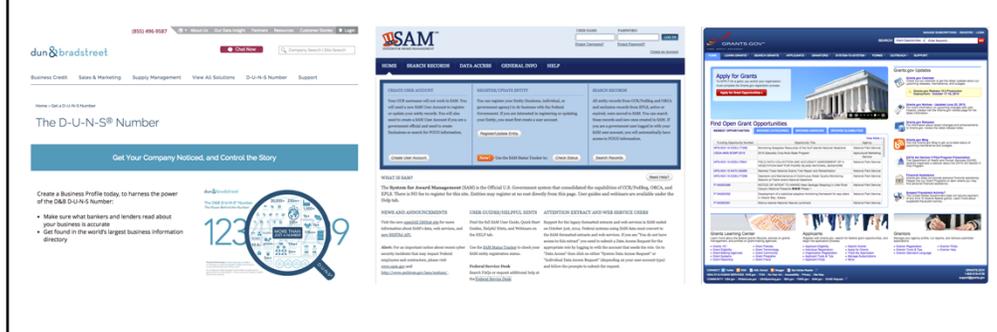
At this point, we'd like to share a few tips gleaned from our collective experience in working with applications submitted to the MFA program each year.

First on the list, make sure your registrations are complete and your passwords and user names are current. You must have a DUNS number, an active SAM.gov registration, and a current and functional Grants.gov registration, and if you are just starting out, you'll need to acquire them in that order. In other words, you must have a DUNS number to register with SAM.gov. You must have an active SAM.gov registration to register with Grants.gov.

It's crucial to remember that your SAM.gov registration expires each year and you must renew it. You can check your status at any time by going to www.sam.gov. In addition, your Grants.gov password expires every 60 days, and leaving accounts inactive for a year or more can result in the removal of all account roles. So ... make sure you know who your Grants.gov Authorized Organization Representative is and be sure the user name and updated password are in place.

Both websites have robust help features and FAQs.

Application Tips

IMPORTANT TO KNOW: We can make grants only to **eligible** applicants that submit **complete** applications, including attachments, **on or before the deadline**. So…

- Start early.
- Do your background research.
- Revisit the grant Notice of Funding Opportunity frequently, and follow the narrative outline it provides. Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections to make it easy for reviewers to read.
- Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon.
- Check your spelling, grammar, and math.
- Ask a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit it.
- Be sure your application is complete.
- Submit to Grants.gov **early** so you can correct any errors.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW: Our regulations state that we can make grants only to **eligible** applicants that submit **complete** applications, including attachments, **on or before the deadline**. So…

- Start early.
- Do your background research. Make it easy for the reviewers to see that you are up to date and know what you're talking about.
- Revisit the grant Notice of Funding Opportunity frequently, and follow the narrative outline it provides. Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections to make it easy for reviewers to read.
- Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon. The people who will review your application are experts, but they may not be totally familiar with your particular field's shorthand. Make it easy for them to understand what you mean.
- Check your spelling, grammar, and math. It counts!
- Ask a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit. Ask them to act like a reviewer who's seeing this for the first time.
- Be sure your application is complete. Check it against the Table of Application Components and then check it again.
- Submit to Grants.gov early so you can correct any errors.

Review Process

Date	Review Activity
Dec 1, 2016*	Applicants submit packets through Grants.gov
Jan 2017*	IMLS staff review applications for completeness and eligibility
Feb 2017*	IMLS staff address any completeness, eligibility issues; select field reviewers
Mar – June 2017	Review period
Jul 2017	IMLS staff analyze panel review scores; review budgets; prepare materials for IMLS Director
Aug 2017	IMLS Director renders final award decisions
Sep 2017*	IMLS notifies applicants of award decisions; provide reviewer comments
Oct/Nov/Dec 1, 2017	Awarded projects begin

This is the general schedule of events to show what happens to your application once we receive it. The times that you will hear from us are marked with asterisks--in December, when you'll receive email acknowledgements that your application has been received by Grants.gov (either successfully or unsuccessfully) and that it has been forwarded to IMLS; in January, when you'll receive an email from us providing you with basic summary information that we ask you to review and an application log number, which is what we will use to track your application. If your application is found to be incomplete or your institution is ineligible, you'll hear from us in January/February.

At that point we go silent, but please know we're working hard behind the scenes! From March through June, your experienced and knowledgeable peers will provide scores and comments based on the criteria outlined in the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity.

In July, we analyze the review results, examine budgets, and prepare materials for the IMLS Director. By law, the IMLS director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions, and this happens in August.

In September, we notify all applicants by email of the award decisions and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers. Project Directors and Authorizing Officials receive award packets.

And on October 1, November 1, or December 1—whichever date the successful applicant chose at the time the application was filed—the projects begin.

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Thank you very much for your interest in IMLS and in Museums for America, and we hope you have found the information in this webinar helpful. Here is a listing of the names, email addresses, and direct phone numbers for program staff in the Office of Museum Services, and we encourage you to contact us with any questions you might have. We'll be very happy to help.

To learn more, visit www.imls.gov