Institute of Museum and Library Services

Welcome!

Our webinar will begin at 3:00 pm, Eastern Time.

Call (866) 299-7945 on any touchtone phone,

and enter 5680404# when prompted.

[Image: Pixabay 3307479]

Hello everyone. My name is Reagan Moore, and with me online today is my colleague, Mark Feitl. We work in the Office of Museum Services here at IMLS, and we're delighted you could join us today.

Our goal in this presentation is to provide specific information about the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums funding opportunity and make some recommendations that you may wish to consider when preparing your application. Just as important, of course, is giving you the chance to ask questions. If we can't get you answers today, we'll make sure we create an opportunity to do so offline.

We'll be recording today's presentation for easy access in the future, and we'll start that process in just a minute. Before we do, we will explain how our system works and how you can ask questions.

RECORDING BEGINS

Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services' webinar, "Inspire! Grants for Small Museums Applicant Webinar."

My name is Reagan Moore, and speaking on behalf of the 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 Inspire! Grants for Small Museums funding opportunity.

Companion Webinar

PRE-RECORDED WEBINAR

IMLS OMS: Choosing a Funding Opportunity for FY2020
Basic information for all applicants

https://www.imls.gov/webinars/imls-oms-choosing-funding-opportunity-fy2020

This is one of a series of webinars designed to help you find the information you need to create a competitive application for IMLS museum funding.

IMLS OMS: Choosing a Funding Opportunity for FY2020 was pre-recorded and are available as recordings, and as a PDF of the slides plus a transcript on our website at the links pictured here.

In that webinar, we cover the IMLS vision, mission, and strategic plan; with an emphasis on how they influence our grant making. We also address institutional eligibility; provide a quick overview of all our funding opportunities; discuss how to find information online (with a focus on our website); and we cover the three places you must be registered in order to apply for an IMLS grant.

We strongly recommend that you take a look and/or listen to this webinar to get the complete picture of preparing and submitting a competitive application to Inspire! Grants for Small Museums.

FY2019 Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Project Category	Number of Applications	Number of Awards	Funds Requested	Funds Awarded
Lifelong Learning	87	15	$3,615,843	$598,362
Community Anchors & Catalysts	23	3	$1,074,324	$150,000
Collections Stewardship & Public Access	92	12	$3,944,735	$423,962
TOTAL	202	30	$8,634,902	$1,172,324

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 FY2019 Inspire! grant cycle. As you can see, with just over $1 million available, we were able to fund 30 of the applications we received.

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums Overview

- Eligibility Review
- Inspire! Funding Goals
- Characteristics of Successful Projects
- Important Dates
- Funding Request and Cost Share
- Project Categories
- Allowable and Unallowable Costs
- Application Components
- Application Tips
- The Review Process
- IMLS Staff Contact Information

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

Eligibility Review
Inspire! Funding Goals
Characteristics of Successful Projects
Important Dates
Funding Request and Cost Share
Project Categories
Allowable and Unallowable Costs—what you can and cannot include in your project
Application Components
Application Tips
The Review Process
IMLS Staff Contact Information

Eligibility Requirements for Museums

To qualify as a "museum," an organization must:

- be a unit of State or local government or be a private, nonprofit organization;
- be located within the United States and its territories;
- use a professional staff;
- be organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes;
- own or use tangible objects, either animate or inanimate;
- care for these objects; AND
- exhibit these objects to the general public on a regular basis through facilities that it owns or operates.

Let's begin with eligibility requirements for museums.

To be eligible to apply, museums must:

- Be either a unit of State or local government or be a private, nonprofit organization that has tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code;
- located in one of the 50 States of the United States of America, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau;
- use a professional staff;
- be organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes;
- own or use tangible objects, either animate or inanimate;
- care for these objects; and
- exhibit these objects to the general public on a regular basis through facilities that it owns or operates.

For more details on each of these points, please take a look at the eligibility information in the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Describing Organizational Size

Applicants should think about a range of attributes that describe their organization, including, but not limited to:

- number of staff members and volunteers
- estimate of total person-hours worked per week;
- operating budget and sources of revenue;
- number and types of objects in the collection;
- size of facility and property;
- types and numbers of audiences served; and
- size relative to other organizations of the same discipline, or within the same geographic region.

There are a wide variety of museum disciplines and geographic locations where museums are located across the country and determining an institution's size may rest on a number of factors. As a result, IMLS invites applicants to consider whether their organization is a good fit for this special initiative, and to make that justification clearly within the application's Organizational Profile document. Applicants should think about a range of attributes that describe their organization, including, but not limited to:

- number of staff members and volunteers
- estimate of total person-hours worked per week;
- operating budget and sources of revenue;
- number and types of objects in the collection;
- size of facility and property;
- types and numbers of audiences served; and
- size relative to other organizations of the same discipline, or within the same geographic region.

Inspire! Funding Goals

To help small museums implement projects that address priorities identified in their strategic plans.

Activities might reflect museums as:
- active resources for lifelong learning
- institutions important in improving the well-being of their communities
- good stewards of the nation's collections

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums is a special initiative of the Museums for America (MFA) program. It is designed to help small museums implement projects that address priorities identified in their strategic plans. This funding opportunity has three project categories: Lifelong Learning, Community Anchors and Catalysts, and Collections Stewardship and Public Access. Each application must select one of these project categories.

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

FIRST, Institutional Impact: Your project should address a key need or challenge that faces your organization.

SECOND, In-depth knowledge: Your proposal should reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.

THIRD, Project-based design: Your work plan should consist of a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge.

AND FOURTH, Demonstrable results: Your project should generate measureable 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 a good idea to think 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 **November 15, 2019**

Awards will be announced in **August 2020**

Projects must start **September 1, 2020**

We want to remind you of important dates for the Inspire! applications. Applications are due by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on November 15, 2019. The deadline 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.

Inspire! awards will be announced in August 2020, and projects must be scheduled to start on the first day of September 2020.

Funding Request and Cost Share Information

HOW MUCH?

$5,000 - $50,000

No cost share required

HOW MANY?

There is no limit on the number of applications your organization may submit to the Inspire! initiative.

Inspire! applicants can request anywhere from $5,000 to $50,000 in grant funds. There is no cost share requirement, though you may include one if your organization will contribute funds toward this particular project. It's important to note that if you decide to include cost share in your application, it must be met by the end of the award – we will hold you to that figure so keep that in mind when applying. 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.

You may not request more than $50,000 in funding for this particular program. This maximum covers the total length of your project activities – it is not a per year maximum. If you ask for less than $5,000 or more than $50,000, your application will most likely be rejected and not reviewed.

Some of you may also be wondering how many applications you may submit. There is no limit on the number of applications your museum may submit to the Inspire! Initiative.

Finally, you may also be wondering how long the project may last. Inspire! grants may be up to two years long.

What is a "project"?

A temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result.

- A project is **temporary** in that it has a defined beginning and end in time, and therefore defined scope and resources.
- And a project is **unique** in that it is not a routine operation, but a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

Source: https://www.pmi.org/about/learn-about-pmi/what-is-project-management

We have made reference several times to "projects" here, and so let's take a minute to consider just exactly what that means. The Project Management Institute has a good definition, which is "A temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result."

They go on further to explain that a project is temporary because it has a defined beginning and end in time and therefore defined scope and resources.

And a project is unique in that it is not a routine operation but rather a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

We recommend that you keep this definition in mind as you conceptualize your IMLS project. Think of it as a temporary, non-routine set of activities, which collectively have a beginning and an end in time, a defined scope requiring specific resources, and which are designed to accomplish a specific, singular goal.

Inspire! Project Categories

Lifelong Learning: IMLS supports the unique ability of museums to encourage exploration, analysis, and questioning for people of all ages and backgrounds and to foster discovery, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and problem solving.

Community Anchors and Catalysts: 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.

Collections Stewardship and Public Access: IMLS supports the role of museums as trusted stewards of museum collections as the natural, cultural, artistic, historical, and scientific foundations of our shared heritage and knowledge.

With that concept of "project" in mind, let's turn to project categories. Second to choosing to apply to the Injpire! Grants for Small Museums funding opportunity, this is likely to be the most important decision you make about your funding application. As you can see here, there are three options: Lifelong Learning, Community Anchors and Catalysts, and Collections Stewardship and Public Access.

Why is your decision about which project 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. It's an important choice, and it's important to get it right.

Project Categories: Lifelong Learning

Inspire! Lifelong Learning projects might include:

- Developing museum resources that foster specific types of literacies
- Interpretive and educational programs
- Exhibition development, design, and fabrication
- Digital learning resources
- Public programs
- Professional development/training for formal and informal educators
- Learning partnerships with schools in support of K-12 school curricula
- Programs and partnership development for out-of-school audiences
- Program evaluation to guide the development, redesign, and/or effective delivery of learning experiences

Successful Lifelong Learning projects will 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.

A project in Lifelong Learning might include all or part of an exhibit, programs, media, training for teachers, partnerships with schools or out-of-school audiences, or program evaluation.

As you plan your project in this category, we strongly recommend starting with the concept of "learner at the center" and build around it. Spend time really thinking through who your learners in this project are and what their needs are. It's not likely going to be "everybody," so who is it really? What do they want to learn, what do you want them to learn, and what's the best way to go at that? We'll get to the whole idea of problems and needs in a few minutes, but a major takeaway here is to be focused in identifying your audience and in thinking about how you are going to serve them.

Project Categories: Community Anchors and Catalysts

MFA Community Anchors and Catalysts projects might include:

- Creating trusted spaces for community learning, debate, and dialogue
- Building new partnerships to strengthen community connections through exhibitions, programs, and events
- Conducting community-focused planning activities
- Implementing audience-focused studies and evaluation
- Applying cross-sector partnership development models and programs to define shared visions for community improvement
- Working with the community to create measures and gather information to understand project progress and impacts

Successful Community Anchors and Catalysts projects strive to create a better quality of life within communities.

A Community Anchors and Catalysts project is likely to include activities that contribute directly to your institution's functioning as an essential partner in addressing community needs. As you scan this list, you'll see the word "community' in nearly every entry. Simply saying you plan to be welcoming to your community or you plan to serve your community is not likely to be enough. Reviewers should be able to see clearly that you have involved members of your community in planning your project and that you'll continue to involve them in its implementation and evaluation.

So, if your project involves exhibitions or interpretive programs, how do you know if your project fits best within Lifelong Learning or Community Anchors and Catalysts? We get this question frequently. After all a significant part of museum work involves creating exhibitions and delivering programs. Which category should you pick?

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 Lifelong Learning 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, and we can make a difference as part of the overall solution," then you might have a Community Anchors and Catalysts project.

Both approaches are legitimate, and both are fundable. Ultimately, it's your choice. What's important is that you choose one and write your application that way. Hybrids don't work as well as sharply focused applications.

**Project Categories:
Collections Stewardship and Public Access**

MFA Collections Stewardship and Public Access projects might include:

- Planning for collections management, care, and conservation
- Preparing to mitigate the impact of natural and man-made disasters on collections and collections information
- Cataloging, inventorying, documenting, and registration
- Acquiring, implementing, and enhancing Collections Management Systems
- Planning and implementing digitization activities
- Conservation surveys and assessments
- Conservation treatments
- Rehousing collections
- Environmental improvements for museum collections storage and exhibit areas

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

Our third project category is that of Collections Stewardship and Public Access, and this includes just about anything you need to do for and with collections, except acquire them.

We are very open to projects that have multiple components configured in ways that make sense for you. One project might consist of cataloging, taking digital photographs, and updating database records, while another might combine digitization activities with rehousing.

We support conservation projects of all kinds—general, detailed, and environmental surveys as well as treatments and environmental improvements. And you are welcome to incorporate aspects of training and/or collections management into these projects if doing so makes sense for your situation.

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

Choosing a Project Category

Lifelong Learning

Community Anchors and Catalysts

Collections Stewardship and Public Access

Having a hard time choosing? 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 whom 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 includes the largest number of activities? 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 applicants differ for each category, but so does our guidance for reviewers.

So how can you choose the best category 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? 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 museum can make a difference? Or is your project about the collections? Will your project result in a better managed, better cared-for, or more accessible set of objects?
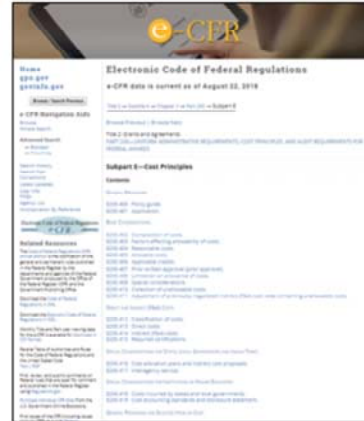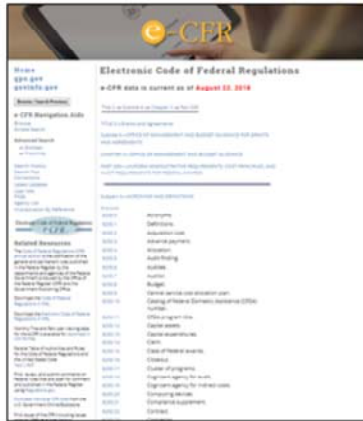
A second way to go at this might be to think about **who you want to review your application.** If you apply under Lifelong Learning, we will put your application in front of educators, learning theorists, and professionals with deep experience in understanding how people learn in

museum environments. Would you rather we put it in front of a a combination of experts in civic engagement, community outreach, and collective impact? If that sounds "right," then it may push you toward Community Anchors and Catalysts. And if you apply under Collections Stewardship and Public Access, you can be confident that your application will be reviewed by some combination of registrars, collection managers, curators, conservators, or collections information specialists. If that seems appropriate, then this is most likely your best choice.

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 project category, and then count to see where MOST of these activities occur and where MOST of 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.

Allowable/Unallowable Costs

https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl

OR

https://tinyurl.com/yall9ewx

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.

Fortunately, the regulations are available online in a searchable format on the U.S. Government Publishing Office website listed on the screen.

Of particular interest is 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 Inspire! Notice of Funding Opportunity, we provide a partial list of the most common examples of allowable costs as pictured here.

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. The rules about allowability apply to both sides.

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
- construction or renovation of facilities
- social activities, ceremonies, receptions, or entertainment
- research projects
- pre-award costs

We also provide a list of generally unallowable costs, again both for IMLS funds and for cost share. 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. 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

These components are required of all Inspire! applications.

- Application for Federal Assistance/Short Organizational Form
- NEW! IMLS Supplementary Information Form (including Abstract)
- NEW! IMLS Museum Program Information Form
- Organizational Profile (2 pages max.)
- Strategic Plan Summary (2 pages max.)
- Narrative (5 pages max.)
- Schedule of Completion (1 page per year max.)
- IMLS Budget Form
- Budget Justification
- List of Key Project Staff and Consultants
- Resumes (2 pages max. each)

Next up are application components. Your application will consist of a series of individual documents, and it's very important to make sure you prepare and submit everything you should.

These application components fall into three categories in the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums funding opportunity. The first is that of **Required Documents**. **All applications must include the documents listed here.** Omission of even just one might result in the exclusion of your application from further consideration. Also important to note are page limits. If you exceed the page limit specified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, we must remove the extras before your application goes out for review. That means your reviewer may well see a paragraph or sentence end in mid air and will wonder about your planning skills and your attentiveness to detail. Make sure your content fits into the page limits specified and make sure the number of pages holds when you convert your document to a PDF.

Two of our required forms are new this year. You will download them through Grants.gov, and they are dynamic. By that I mean that your answers to certain questions will determine which questions you see next. These are the **IMLS Supplementary Information Form (including Abstract)** and the **IMLS Museum Program Information Form.** These replace the IMLS Program Information Sheet that has long been part of our application process.

Conditionally Required Documents

These components are required of <u>some</u> Inspire! applications.

- Proof of Private, Nonprofit Status
- Final Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Detailed Condition Reports and/or Conservation Treatment Proposals
- Digital Product Form

    IMPORTANT: The term "digital product" includes (1) digitized and born-digital content, resources, or assets; (2) software; and (3) research data. See the Digital Product Form for specific examples.

The second category of application components is that of **Conditionally Required Documents**. **Some** applications must include one, two, or all three of these, and it's your job to figure out which are required for yours.

- If you are applying as a nonprofit, then you must include your proof of nonprofit status issued by the IRS.
- If you are using a federally negotiated indirect cost in your budget, then you must include a copy of your final rate agreement.
- If you will create digital products during the course of your project, then you must complete and submit a Digital Product Form.
- If you are requesting support for conservation treatment, then you must include detailed condition reports and/or formal conservation treatment proposals.

Just like the required documents, omission of even one might result in the exclusion of your application from further consideration.

Please note that the term "digital product" includes (1) digitized and born-digital content, resources, or assets; (2) software; and (3) research data. Please see the form itself for more specific examples. If you are creating any of these types of materials, you must include the form with your application.

Supporting Documents

These components are <u>optional</u> in Inspire! applications. Make good decisions, and include only those that supplement the Narrative and support the project description provided in the application.

- Letters of commitment
- Bibliography or references relevant to your proposed project design or evaluation strategy
- Letters of support from experts and stakeholders
- Relevant images
- Exhibit design plans
- Reports from planning activities

- Contractor or vendor quotes
- Equipment specifications
- Products or evaluations from similar completed or ongoing projects
- Collections, technology, or other departmental plans as applicable to the proposed project
- Web links to relevant online materials
- Needs assessments

The third group of application components is **Supporting Documents, and here is a partial list of examples.** Supporting documents are completely optional. You may submit some or none. We urge you to 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.**

Organizational Profile

Page One:

- your organization's mission or statement of purpose;
- your organization's governance structure, including parent/child relationships (if applicable) and the level of support provided by the parent organization;
- your service area; and
- a brief history of your organization

Page Two:

- number of staff members and volunteers;
- estimate of total person-hours worked per week;
- operating budget and sources of revenue;
- number and types of objects in the collection;
- size of facility and property;
- types and numbers of audiences served; and
- size relative to other organizations of the same discipline, or within the same geographic region.

Let's turn to three specific documents that you will need to prepare from scratch, and by that we mean they are not forms. As you've seen, 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 an **organizational profile.** We ask that you create a two-page document describing your organization. On the first page, we ask that you address your organization's mission or statement of purpose; your organization's governance structure, including parent/child relationships (if applicable) and the level of support provided by the parent organization; your service area; and a brief history of your organization. On page two of this document, we ask that you describe your organization's size using the range of attributes that we shared earlier in this presentation.

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

Inside advice: Use a narrative format for your strategic plan summary.

Next is the **strategic plan summary**. As you read the Inspire! Notice of Funding Opportunity, you will see frequent references to strategic plans or strategic goals. IMLS wants to help you achieve your goals, and indeed, we've seen that one of the characteristics of a successful Inspire! project is addressing a key need or challenge that faces your museum and whose resolution 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. These two pages are all they have, and they tell us they find a well-constructed, thoughtful, written summary the best way to confirm connections to your project. Make it easy for them to see them.

Narrative: Project Justification

Tell us:

- What do you propose to do?
- What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?
- Who or what will benefit from your project?
- How will your project advance your institution's strategic plan?
- How will your project address the goals of the Museums for America program and the project category you have chosen?

Reviewers will look for:

- *Clear explanation of the project, and if Collections Stewardship and Public Access, a clear description and quantifications of the collections/records that will be a focus of the project*
- *Evidence supporting the identification of the need, problem, or challenge to be addressed, and if Collections Stewardship and Public Access, its high-priority status*
- *Clear identification of the beneficiaries and their involvement in planning where possible*
- *Specific, actionable, and measurable ways in which the project advances institution's strategic plan*
- *Alignment of project with MFA and the project category chosen*

And now let's talk about the **Narrative** of your proposal. You have five pages to cover three very important issues, and the Notice of Funding Opportunity provides lengthy guidance on what the Narrative should cover. The specifics differ for each project category (i.e. Lifelong Learning, Community Anchors and Catalysts, and Collections Stewardship and Public Access), and so you should make sure you're following the guidance for the category you've chosen.

On the left side of the slide are the questions we ask you to address in your Narrative, and on the right side are the points we ask reviewers to evaluate. It's good practice to consider both sides when you are putting together your application.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

In this first section of the Narrative, you should lay out the reasoning for your project. This is where you describe the problem that you're setting out to solve or the need that you're going to address, and you tell us how you know it deserves attention. You might do this by citing published research, previous studies, or data gathered by your organization or by others. You should be crystal clear in identifying who or what will benefit from your project, because every activity that you identify in the work plan and every result that you propose to achieve should have an obvious connection to this problem and the beneficiaries you identify.

Defining a need, problem, or challenge

- Remember that the federal government wants its investment to result in something getting better.
- Articulate what will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible.
- Identify why it is important that this change happens.
- Hone your problem definition carefully.
- Present data that support your problem definition.

Because the need, problem, or challenge is foundational in your application, keep these points in mind.

- The federal government wants its investment to result in SOMETHING getting better.
- As you define your need, problem, or challenge, articulate WHAT will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible. Will someone learn something, develop a skill, change an attitude? Will members of your community be better able to work together to solve problems? Will collections be better cared for? Will their lifespan be extended? Will access to your collections and the information surrounding them be expanded? Identify why it is important that this particular change happens.
- Hone your problem definition carefully in clear, succinct terms.
- Gather and present data that support your problem definition.

Narrative: Project Work Plan

Tell us:

- What specific activities will you carry out?
- What is your project's maturity level?
- What are the risks to the project and are they accounted for in the work plan?
- Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?
- When and in what sequence will your activities occur?
- What time, financial, personnel, and other 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
- Activities that appropriately reflect the project's maturity level
- Clearly stated goals, assumptions, and risks
- Appropriate evaluation activities and performance measurements
- Team with sufficient experience and skills
- Realistic and achievable schedule
- Appropriate time, financial, personnel, and other resources
- Clear methodology for tracking progress and adjusting course when necessary
- Effective plan for communicating results and/or sharing discoveries

PROJECT WORK PLAN

This is where you identify who will do what activities, when, and using what resources.

Note that we ask you to identify your project's maturity level. Do you plan to explore a totally new way of doing things? Are you piloting a method, strategy, or procedure? Are you applying a tested approach to larger effort?

We also ask you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project and to tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning. We'll say more about that in a few minutes.

We want you to explain how you will track your progress toward achieving your proposed results and what you'll do if you need to correct course. And finally, reflecting the federal government's desire that everything in which we invest generate as broad a benefit as possible, we ask you to tell how and with whom you will share your project's results.

Defining an activity

- An activity is something that someone does.
- It has a beginning and an end.
- You know when you've finished it because it doesn't need to be done any more (or it is no longer on your To Do List).
- It is not a "goal," "result," or "outcome." It is a thing you do as part of striving to achieve those.
- Aim for a reasonable level of granularity in identifying your activities—not too much, not too little, just right.

[Image: https://pixabay.com/en/stick-figure-road-sign-traffic-sign-1097163/]

Your work plan will be built on activities, so it's important to be clear about just what an activity is.

An activity is something that someone does. It has a beginning and an end (just like projects), and you know when you've finished it because it doesn't need to be done any more. It is no longer on your To Do List.

An activity is NOT a goal, a result, or an outcome. Rather it is something you do as part of striving to achieve those.

Aim for a reasonable level of granularity in identifying your activities. That might be hard, but strive for not too much, not too little, but rather just right.

Defining risks

About Risk

- There is no checklist of risks, but every project has them.
- The best proposals will show that the applicant is aware of them and has thought through a plan for dealing with them.
- Answer the question, "What if?"

Examples of Risk

o A project is dependent upon fundraising to generate the cost share, but it might not be complete by the time the application is submitted. What will the institution do if that money is not available by the time the project gets underway?

o A project may be structured around university interns, who will be selected and trained according to well thought-out processes. What will happen if one or more interns drops out? What's the plan for replacing them mid-project?

o A project involving rehousing collections into new museum-quality collections storage furniture might run into delays in preparing the space or in the delivery of the cabinets. What happens to the collection items then? How will the institution ensure that they remain safe and secure?

[Image: https://cheekymunkey.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/What-is-an-IT-security-risk-1024x437.jpg]

We also ask you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project and to tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning. Think of it as answering the question, "What if?"

There is no checklist of risks, but every project has them. The best proposals will show that you are aware of them and have thought through a plan for dealing with them. Look at your activities and think about what could go wrong. Focus on the ones where your experience (your own or that of your group) tells you, "Yes, that could happen" and identify steps you would take in response.

IMLS knows things go differently than expected. We just want you to prepare by identifying implementable options.

Here are some examples of risk that might be part of a project for which you might seek Inspire! funding.

- A project may be dependent upon fundraising to generate the cost share, but it is not complete by the time the application is submitted. What will the institution do if that money is not available by the time the project gets underway?
- A project may be structured around university interns, who will be selected and trained according to well thought-out processes. What will happen if one or more interns drops

out? What's the plan for replacing them mid-project?

- A project involving rehousing collections into new museum-quality collections storage furniture might run into delays in preparing the space or in the delivery of the cabinets. What happens to the collection items then? How will the institution ensure that they remain safe and secure?

Narrative: Project Results

Tell us:

- What are your intended results that will address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified?
- *For Lifelong Learning and Community Anchors and Catalysts projects:* How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the intended audience change as a result of your project?
- *For Collections Stewardship and Public Access projects:* How will the care, condition, management, access to, or use of the museum collections and/or records that define the focus of your project improve?
- What data will you collect and report to measure your project's success?
- What tangible products will result from your project?
- How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project?

Reviewers will look for:

- *Clearly articulated, realistic, meaningful, and actionable results linked to the need, problem, or challenge addressed*
- *A solidly grounded and appropriately structured plan to effect the meaningful change proposed*
- *A well designed and feasible plan for collecting and reporting data*
- *Useful tangible products*
- *A reasonable and practical plan for sustaining the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of the award*

PROJECT RESULTS

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

This section is your chance to convince the reviewers that your project will result in something getting better. The need or problem you identified in your Project Justification will be addressed directly, and it will be diminished or eliminated altogether.

We ask you to tell us what data you will collect and report in order to measure your project's success.

If your project will generate tangible products (and most do), here's the opportunity to describe them and make the case that they will be useful. And last but not least, we ask that you tell us how you will sustain the benefit of the project. How will this improvement that you propose to make continue once your grant is over?

Defining intended results, success measures

- Answer the question, "What will be better as the result of this work?"
- Think through how you'll recognize success and how you'll measure it for each of your high-level activities.
- Tie everything back to your need, problem, or challenge.
- Include tangential benefits or positive outcomes, but make sure they are in addition to, not instead of, your original intended results.
- Consider constructing a logic model to explain your intended results and your plan for achieving them.

We often hear that defining intended results and success measures is challenging for applicants, so it's worth spending a bit of time on this here.

Let's think back to the questions we referenced a couple of slides ago when we talked about defining the need, problem, or challenge that your project is addressing. If you said someone will learn something, how will you know? If your problem related to segments of your community being better able to work together, how will you know when that has been achieved? If collections will be better cared for, how will you be sure and how will you measure "better:? If you're digitizing to expand accessibility, how will you know when you've done it?

All of your results should tie back to your need, problem, or challenge. You may well experience tangential benefits and/or positive outcomes, but make sure you identify them as "in addition to" and not "instead of" your original intended results. Reviewers are likely to see that as a disconnect.

This focus on results and measuring success in meaningful ways is not new, but it hasn't gotten easy. There has been a tremendous amount of work done on ways to measure success, and we as an agency are still working on this. For you as an applicant though, we encourage you to consider using a logic model to explain your intended results and your plan for achieving them.

Many Inspire applicants use logic models, and reviewers appreciate their conciseness and focus. There are many excellent resources available to help you construct a logic model, and among these are IMLS's "Shaping Outcomes," a free online course developed in partnership with Indiana University-Purdue University of Indianapolis. It is available at www.shapingoutcomes.org, and it is customized to meet the needs of museum applicants. There are downloadable worksheets and numerous examples that you are likely to find relevant to your own work.

So, to recap: Your Narrative has three sections—Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results, and you have five pages for it. The sections 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.

Application Tips

Check your registrations, and know your usernames and passwords.

D-U-N-S NUMBER
DATA UNIVERSAL NUMBERING SYSTEM

SAM
SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT

GRANTS.GOV℠
FIND. APPLY. SUCCEED.℠

- D-U-N-S® Number (www.dnb.com)
- System for Award Management (www.sam.gov)
- Grants.gov (www.grants.gov)

You need all three. SAM.gov expires every year. Grants.gov passwords expire every 60 days. Grants.gov accounts are deactivated after 365 days of inactivity.

At this point, we'd like to share a few tips gleaned from our collective experience in working with applications submitted to our funding programs.

First on the list, make sure your registrations are complete and your passwords and usernames 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 username and updated password are in place.

Both the SAM.gov and Grants.gov 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.
- Become familiar with Grants.gov Workspace. See
  https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html
- Do your background research.
- Revisit the Inspire! Notice of Funding Opportunity frequently, and follow the Narrative outline it provides. Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections in your Narrative 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 clearly that we can make grants only to **eligible** applicants that submit **complete** applications, including attachments, **on or before the deadline**. Those are the concepts we must live by. So here are some tips to help ensure that you can too.

- Start early. You've already done that by participating in this webinar, but don't lose momentum. Keep going!
- Become familiar with Grants.gov's Workspace. This has been available as an option for a couple of years now, and it is now the **only** option. It has many good features, including upfront validation, which allows you to correct errors prior to submission, and the opportunity to collaborate with others in creating your application. Consider starting with the Workspace Overview and check out the tutorials.
- 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 Inspire! Notice of Funding Opportunity frequently, and follow the Narrative outline it provides. Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections in your Narrative 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 with reviewers!
- 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 in the Notice of Funding Opportunity…and then check it again.

- Submit to Grants.gov early so you can correct any errors and avoid any trauma created by technology challenges.

Application Processing and Review Timeline

Date	Review Activity
Nov 15, 2019	Applicants submit packets through Grants.gov
Dec 2019 – Feb 2020	IMLS staff review applications for completeness and eligibility
Feb – Jun 2020	Review period
Jul 2020	IMLS Director renders final award decisions
Aug 2020	IMLS notifies applicants of award decisions; provides reviewer comments
Sep 1, 2020	Awarded projects begin

This is the general schedule of events to show what happens to your application once we receive it. IMLS staff will review it for completeness and eligibility, and you will hear from us via email if there are any problems.

From February through June, your experienced and knowledgeable peers will provide scores and comments based on the criteria outlined in the Inspire! Notice of Funding Opportunity, and IMLS staff will examine your budget, your financials, and your track record with past and current grants. We then prepare materials for the IMLS Deputy Director for Museums and the IMLS Director. By law, the IMLS Director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions, and this happens in July.

In August, we will notify you by email of the award decisions and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers.

And on September 1, 2020, funded projects begin.

Office of Museum Services

Lifelong Learning	Community Anchors and Catalysts	Collections Stewardship and Public Access
Reagan Moore Museum Program Officer rmoore@imls.gov 202-653-4637	Reagan Moore Museum Program Officer rmoore@imls.gov 202-653-4637	Mark Feitl Museum Program Officer mfeitl@imls.gov 202-653-4635

Thank you very much for your interest in IMLS and in the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums funding opportunity, and we hope you have found the information in this webinar helpful. Mark and I are happy to answer any questions about the program or discuss your project ideas.
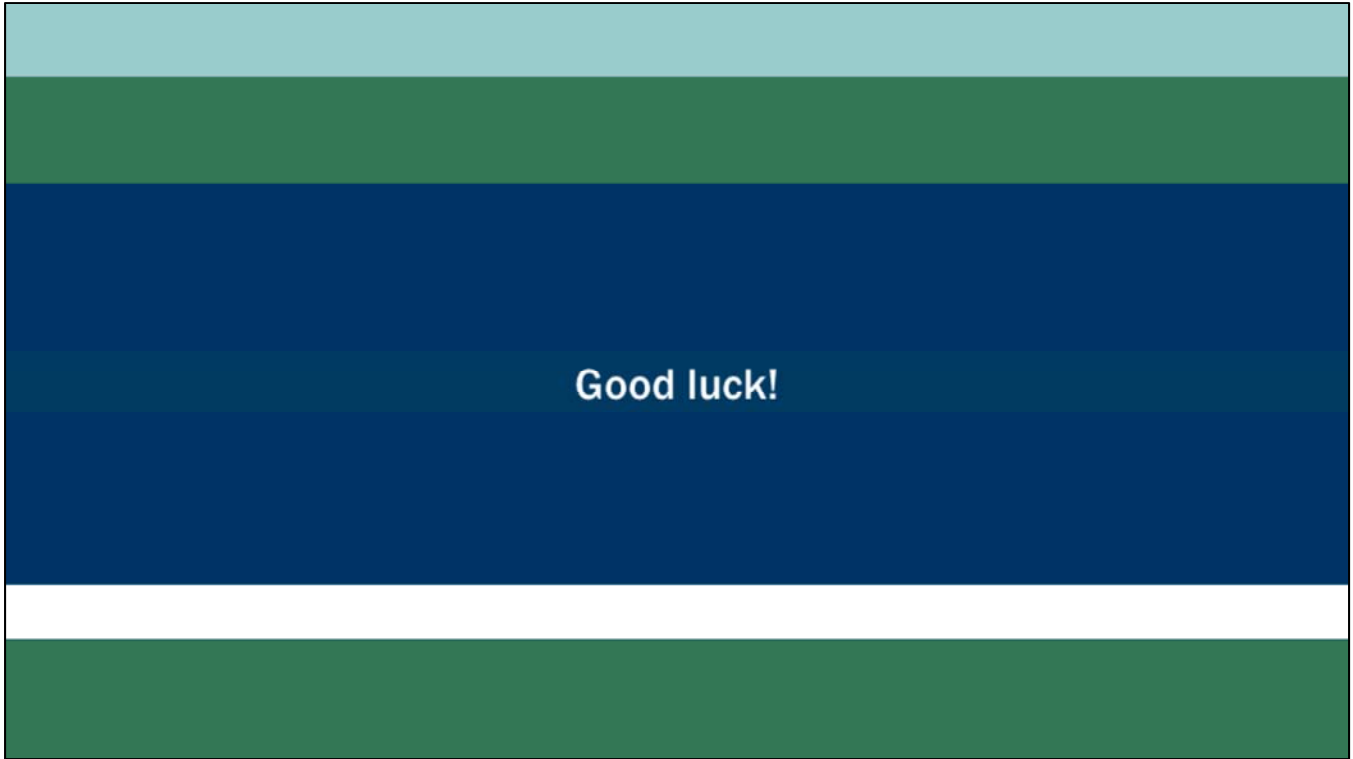
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Questions?

Good luck!

Thanks again for participating today, everyone. We look forward to hearing from you with any questions over the next few weeks, and of course to seeing your application on November 15!