



Native American / Native Hawaiian Museum Services

Sample Application MN-253354-OMS-23

Miami Tribe of Oklahoma

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$180,107
Amount of cost share: \$0

The Myaamia Heritage Museum & Archive will revamp and install its community curated Myaamia Ribbonwork exhibit. First displayed at the Miami University Art Museum, the exhibit's original run was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic. This project will support physical improvements to the Tribal museum's exhibition gallery, including upgrading lighting and purchasing and installing new display cases, in order to safely exhibit early 19th century ribbonwork objects. Additional project activities include securing loans of historic ribbonwork objects, planning and installing the exhibition, and engaging the community through outreach activities and educational events. The exhibit will benefit the citizens of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma by creating an additional opportunity to share cultural knowledge and will continue community efforts to revitalize Myaamia Ribbonwork.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Performance Measurement Plan

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the current Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

Exhibiting Myaamia Ribbonwork for the Myaamia Community

Project Justification

Several years ago, in order to address the identified need of supporting the continued revitalization of ribbonwork practice in the Myaamia community, the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma began collaborating with the Miami University Art Museum [MUAM] for an exhibition of Myaamia (Miami) ribbonwork objects. The collaboration was successful, resulting in the community-curated exhibition *peepankišaapiikahkia eehkwaatamenki* “Myaamia Ribbonwork.” The exhibition provided a historical context and background to the contemporary revival of ribbonwork among the Miami people. Unfortunately, the exhibit was opened in January 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic quickly thereafter disrupted all plans for community travel, events, and education centered on it. Only a small number of community members were able to visit the exhibit in person before the temporary closing of the Miami University campus. The MUAM shifted to creating virtual educational content before the close of the exhibit in June 2020, but the ability to experience these pieces in person remains a need for our community members.

In order to honor the hard work completed by our friends at Miami University Art Museum and continue the work of revitalization and reclamation of this artform in our community, the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma requests funding for a project to replicate *peepankišaapiikahkia eehkwaatamenki* in Miami, Oklahoma. The entity designated to complete this project is the Myaamia Heritage Museum & Archive [MHMA]. The MHMA is under the full control of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma Business Committee and is overseen by the Cultural Resources Department. In order to properly accomplish the goal of exhibiting Myaamia ribbonwork for the Myaamia community, this project will seek to improve the conditions in our exhibit gallery, work with loaning institutions to procure loans of Miami-affiliated objects, and install the *Myaamia Ribbonwork* exhibit.

IMLS Program Goals & Objectives

This project would address two of the goals and objectives of this grant program. The primary program-level goal achieved by this project is to “**empower people of all ages and backgrounds through experiential and cross-disciplinary learning and discovery.**” Specifically, this grant project can be categorized under Objective 1.2 as supporting exhibitions.

Secondarily, this project will also “**advance the management and care of Native American and Native Hawaiian collections and their associated documentation.**” Objective 3.2 under this program goal details support for environmental improvement, which will be accomplished by taking steps to improve our preservation environment in our display gallery.

Strengthening Museum Services

Though our museum program has been operational since 2006, it has never pursued inter-institution loans previously. To fully plan and execute an exhibit of the proposed scale would mark a significant achievement for the museum. Historic ribbonwork pieces, like those held by the National Museum of American Indian, have not been viewed in Miami, Oklahoma since they were removed from the community by collectors over 120 years ago.

During the summer of 2022, the MHMA completed a preservation assessment with professional conservation and preservation consultant Rebecca Elder of Rebecca Elder Heritage Preservation, LLC. [Assessment report attached as Supporting Document 1.] This project was supported through the National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant. Specifically, one area noted in the assessment was that current light levels are excessive and may be damaging to original artifacts on display. It is necessary to rectify the damaging levels of light in order to safely display loaned ribbonwork objects, which are particularly sensitive to light. We are requesting funds to retrofit our current fluorescent tube light fixtures with LED track lighting with dimmer

switches. We have obtained an estimate for this work from a tribal citizen who often provides construction work for the museum. [See attached Supporting Document 2.] Another change planned to reduce light reflection is to change the ceiling grid from white to black tiles. Once we complete this work we expect to reduce our light levels from the measured level of 575 lux to the recommended range of below 150 lux.

The project will also allow us to replace non-museum cases and increase the number of covered, secure display cases available for exhibits. The museum currently relies primarily on uncovered pedestals and display cases made for commercial purposes for the display of three-dimensional objects. Acquiring new cases will improve our collection preservation by protecting against accidental damage, theft, and environmental contaminants. We expect to add nine museum cases to the exhibit area in order to accommodate the loaned objects.

Project Target Groups & Beneficiaries

This project is directly designed to benefit the citizens of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, which number over 6,000. The sharing of cultural knowledge with the Myaamia people is a responsibility we hold central to the mission of MHMA. We anticipate that the ability for citizens to see these works of art will directly influence the continuing community effort of revitalizing this artform.

Ribbonwork revitalization in the Myaamia community is a process which can be traced back to the first time Myaamia citizens viewed these objects in the collections at NMAI in 1997. Since that time, the Miami Tribe has continually invested in the reclamation of the craft and language of ribbonwork. In 2013, the Myaamia Center at Miami University was awarded an NEH ArtWorks grant to document existing ribbonwork, conduct research, and provide instructional materials to tribal citizens. This grant led to the first community workshop in 2015. The workshop was well-attended and started a wave of interest in the community that we have not seen fade. Several more workshops have been conducted across many Myaamia places, and they are always well-attended and well-received. The book that was published at the conclusion of that grant is accessed and used heavily by a variety of people, and coordinating videos accessible on YouTube have been viewed thousands of times, with one reaching almost 5,000 views. The positive results of these previous projects spurred the Miami Tribe to collaborate with MUAM to plan and organize the first *Myaamia Ribbonwork* exhibit. Due to the abrupt closure of Miami University's campus in 2020, the fruits of this planning remain unrealized. The desire of community members to engage with these cultural objects is not yet met.

This exhibit will also reach a wider intertribal audience of the northeast region of Oklahoma. Nine federally recognized nations call Ottawa County home, and the ribbonwork displayed on these pieces will likely be of interest to several other surrounding tribes that have a similar cultural practice, such as the Peoria, Shawnee, Kickapoo, and Osage peoples. The MHMA is located directly on Route 66 in downtown Miami, within one block of a major historical landmark that draws scores of Route 66 travelers each year. While reaching this audience is not our main objective, we are always cognizant of educating these visitors in a respectful way. These visitors arrive with pre-conceived ideas of Indigenous peoples, and we often engage in conversation to challenge those ideas and leave them with a positive change.

Project Stakeholders

The *Myaamia Ribbonwork* exhibit in 2020 was a true collaboration between the Miami Tribe and Miami University Art Museum. Though the director of the MUAM has since retired, other staff were key to the collaboration and will be available to assist MHMA staff in providing created content, conveying information about the original loans, and understanding installation needs.

The community curators for the original exhibit were Myaamia citizens George Ironstrack and Kara Strass, both of whom are on staff at the Myaamia Center. The Myaamia Center is a Miami Tribe initiative located within an academic setting, and serves the needs of the Myaamia people, Miami University, and partner communities through research, education, and outreach that promotes Myaamia language, culture, knowledge, and values. The Myaamia Center is closely involved in all exhibit planning at MHMA to provide input for cultural perspective

and correct Myaamia language. George and Kara will continue to provide their support as community curators for the second installment of *Myaamia Ribbonwork*.

The Project Director for this grant will be Meghan Dorey, manager of the Myaamia Heritage Museum & Archive. She will be primarily assisted by Morgan Lippert, Curator of Exhibits. Meghan has been at MHMA for 15 years and has successfully completed several IMLS grants. She holds an MLIS from the University of Wisconsin and remains consistently active with the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums. Morgan joined MHMA in 2021 after graduating with a BA in Museum Studies from Beloit College. She has completed a few exhibits already, taking the lead on the currently installed *Minohsaya: Myaamia & Peewalia Painted Hide Art*. The MHMA does not maintain permanent exhibits, but instead generally rotates through two exhibits in a year, with each exhibit remaining in place for one year. Because of the importance of this exhibit, it will use the entire gallery space for nearly two years. This will allow the maximum number of tribal citizens to view the exhibit, as many only visit Miami once a year. Because the exhibit rotation will slow down for this period, the staff will be able to dedicate the needed time to successfully mount this exhibit.

Project Work Plan

Project Activities

1. Lighting upgrade

One of the most impactful changes identified in our preservation assessment report would be to switch our lighting fixtures from fluorescent tubes to controllable LED track lighting. This work would begin immediately within the grant period. In conjunction with the lighting change, we will also replace the c tiles.

2. Exhibit Planning

Immediately upon grant notification, we will begin completing the necessary loan paperwork for each lender and arranging for the loans to be executed. Because this exhibit was previously curated and mounted, we anticipate minimal risk in this step. The first installation included 18 loaned objects from eight separate sources. We anticipate that there may be some objects loaned for the 2020 exhibit that will not be able to be included in our exhibit due to cost, institutional policy, or other unforeseen factors. We plan to accommodate this by locating similar items that can serve the same purpose as the original object. There were several objects identified as possibilities during the planning of the original exhibit that could be revisited as alternate items. Consultation with the community curators during the months leading up to the installation of the exhibit will allow us to interpret any alternate objects or changes to exhibit plans in a cohesive way that will fit seamlessly into content created for the first installation.

We have already been in contact with Rachel Shabica, the supervisory registrar at the NMAI. She indicated there would be nothing apparent that would prevent the same loan from 2020 to be executed again, with the change in institution to MHMA. Ms. Shabica indicated that NMAI generally prefers to have one year of lead time to arrange outgoing loans. We have allowed for 18 months from the start of the grant period to the exhibit opening to allow for any delays or obstacles that may impede the loan process. Ms. Shabica also noted that allowing physical access to an object's originating community is central to the goal of NMAI, and they were likely to do what they could to ensure a successful loan.

Included in the 2020 MUAM exhibit were several objects loaned from personal collections of current ribbonwork artists. The MHMA is familiar with all these community members and have worked with them closely in the past. It is highly unlikely that these artists would be unwilling to work with the MHMA to loan the same objects or similar ones. The MHMA will cover any shipping costs for these artists.

3. Purchase Display Cases

In addition to improving the physical space of the gallery, we need to address the cases required for loaned objects. When the tribal museum program began in 2006, we purchased 4 basic table cases from Gaylord Archival for use in a display area of approximately 200 square feet. Throughout the past 15 years, we have increased our exhibit size, consistency, and collection items displayed, but we have not kept pace with acquiring

more cases. Our current exhibit gallery is approximately 1,400 square feet and have only acquired one additional case.

Attached as Supporting Document 3 is an exhibit plan, including case numbers and sizes, from Miami University Art Museum. Using this case list, we are proposing the purchase of 9 additional cases to ensure the security and correct environmental control for any loaned objects.

4. Install & Maintain Exhibit

In line with the lead time requested by NMAI Loan Policies, we are anticipating an exhibit opening in January 2025 and closing in August 2026. Though this doesn't align well with the grant period, we value having the exhibit remain open through the month of June, as that is when the Annual General Council Meeting is held and when most citizens are able to visit the museum. We recognize the exhibit will close after the grant period has ended and understand that any costs incurred at closing will be the responsibility of the MHMA and the Miami Tribe. The Miami Tribe has a track record of consistently funding the museum at appropriate levels, and these costs would come out of the regular exhibition budget for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026.

5. Conduct outreach and educational events

In Year 2 and Year 3 of the grant, the MHMA will host a total of 6 community events. These could be guest lectures, artist talks, or ribbonwork workshops. These events will be primarily targeted toward Myaamia citizens but lectures and artist talks would be open to the public and are well-suited to build and maintain relationships within the city of Miami and surrounding areas. At the conclusion of each event, we will distribute a survey for attendees to provide feedback, from which we will compile quantitative and qualitative data for measuring project results.

The past few years have also increased our capacity for virtual engagement. The team at the Myaamia Center and MUAM have already created virtual content for the 2020 exhibit, and we would rely on those to reach our members in diaspora, but we also can have long-distance presentations and discussions over Zoom. Even though the exhibit is physically mounted in Miami, Oklahoma, we are always mindful of our citizens who may not be able to travel and will do our best to engage them with the exhibit in a meaningful way.

6. Comply with IMLS Requirements

The Miami Tribe is committed to attending all required IMLS Meetings and completing required reports in a timely manner.

Project Staff Time Requirements

This project will be planned, implemented and managed by Project Director Meghan Dorey and Curator of Exhibitions Morgan Lippert. Three times annually during the grant period, project staff will meet with a representative of the Accounting and Grants department to review the project schedule and activities to ensure that progress toward project goals is met.

During Year 1, Meghan Dorey will take the lead on navigating the loan process with lending institutions. We anticipate this will take approximately 25% of her time, concentrated in the first eight months. Also during Year 1, Both Meghan and Morgan Lippert will be involved with all consultations with MUAM staff and community curators. Morgan will oversee the acquisition of casework and mount preparation, taking an expected 20% of her time overall, but concentrated in the last four months of Year 1.

During Year 2, Meghan will continue working with the logistical arrangements of incoming loans, and Morgan will oversee production of exhibit promotional graphics and materials and coordinate exhibit installation. Both staff will work with other employees of the Cultural Resources Office to plan and conduct outreach and education events. This year will see periods of intense time requirements revolving around installation, but also have periods of relative quiet once the exhibit is installed. Morgan will be responsible for day-to-day monitoring of the exhibit, including conducting integrated pest management activities and checking temperature and humidity levels. These activities are expected to take 15% of Meghan's time and 20% of Morgan's time overall, but nearly 100% of time for both during the period from loans arriving and the exhibit opening.

During Year 3, both staff members will continue to plan and execute educational events with the Cultural Resources Office and monitor the exhibit. Nearing the end of the grant period, Meghan will be in contact with the lending institutions to arrange return of loaned objects. Over the period of Year 3, the project will only take approximately 5% of Meghan's time and 10% of Morgan's time.

All costs attributed to staff time will be considered an in-kind contribution.

Project Results

The primary goal of this project is to **empower our community through experiential and cross-disciplinary learning and discovery**. Not only will our citizens of all ages have the opportunity to learn from historic ribbonwork objects in the exhibit, they will also be able to apply that knowledge in hands-on experience and skill-building through participation in ribbonwork workshops.

Though only a small number of citizens were able to view the 2020 MUAM exhibit, even fewer are able to travel to places like the NMAI to see Miami objects, some of which may even originate from their own families. We know from conversations with those who have seen these objects that the feelings they evoke can be complex. They represent a skill that was honed over many generations but was lost in a matter of one or two. These objects hold beauty and pain concurrently, and this exhibit will contribute not only to advancement in revitalizing the art of ribbonwork but in healing some of the pain that separation of these things from their families caused.

Myaamia scholar Dr. Haley Shea, writing in a post about Myaamia perspectives of healing for the Myaamia Community Blog, notes a "pathway toward healing from collective trauma is living out our shared cultural heritage."¹ She later notes ribbonwork as one of the shared cultural practices that can directly contribute to communal healing. Ribbonwork may hold remnants of a collective trauma, but it also holds ancestors' stories and knowledge, and sharing that directly with Myaamia people will strengthen the Myaamia community overall. As part of this project, we will gather quantitative data like visitor counts, workshop registrations, and funds expended to measure if the goals of this project were successful. But it is the qualitative outcomes that will mean the most in measuring the impact this exhibit will have on strengthening the Myaamia community. This project directly provides the opportunity for gathering, for learning from one another, for telling stories about makers and family members and ancestors, and for sharing experiences that enhance community wellness. We will gather some of this qualitative data through providing a space for visitor feedback within the gallery space, as well as distributing surveys at workshops and educational events. Visitors to the exhibit will gain knowledge of the art of ribbonwork, be exposed to the Myaamia language related to it, and learn how ribbonwork represents critical aspects of Myaamia heritage and culture.

The goal of improving lighting conditions in the museum gallery will have a lasting positive impact on the management of our museum collection and will benefit all future exhibits. After this project concludes and the ribbonwork is returned to those institutions that hold them, the experience and memories of seeing them will remain with the Myaamia community. This project will improve the facility of the MHMA in a way that directly affects our ability to bring additional significant exhibits to the Myaamia community, build on those experiences, and continue on that pathway toward healing.

¹ Shea, Haley D. "Historical Trauma: Myaamia Perspective on Healing." 4 October 2021, Aacimotaatiyankwi. Accessed 11 November 2022. <https://aacimotaatiyankwi.org/2021/10/04/historical-trauma-part-2-myaamia-perspective-on-healing/>

Applicant Name: Miami Tribe of Oklahoma

Project Title: Exhibiting Myaamia Ribbonwork for the Myaamia Community

| Performance Measure | Data We Will Collect (e.g., counts, costs, weights, volumes, temperatures, percentages, hours, observations, opinions, feelings) | Source of Our Data (e.g., members of the target group, project staff, stakeholders, internal/external documents, recording devices, databases) | Method We Will Use (e.g., survey, questionnaire, interview, focus group, informal discussion, observation, assessment, document analysis) | Schedule (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, beginning/end) |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| Effectiveness: The extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results | At the end of Year 1, the project director will use a light meter to measure lux measurements throughout the gallery. Light levels will measure within recommended ranges for display of historic artifacts | | | |
| | At each outreach event, the number of attendees will be recorded, and participants will be requested to fill out a survey form to provide data about their level of learning and feedback reflecting their experiences with the ribbonwork exhibit. | | | |
| Efficiency: How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group | Bi-weekly, staff will report hours spent on the project through the tribal electronic timesheet system. | | | |
| | Every four months, the project director will review project goals, timelines, and budget status with a representative of the Tribe's Accounting and Grants Department. | | | |
| Quality: How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group | Continuously after installation of the ribbonwork exhibit, visitors will be given the opportunity to leave qualitative feedback through 'talk-back stations', where they can answer question prompts or leave freeform comments. At the end of grant Years 2 and 3, these feedback comments will be analyzed to be included in performance reports. | | | |
| | At the conclusion of the grant, community members will be asked to take part in a virtual discussion about the ribbonwork exhibit project and their feelings of empowerment in continuing the revitalization of the art form. This discussion will not be recorded, but thorough notes will be taken by project staff, and particular responses will be written and attributed with permission. The results of this discussion will be provided to IMLS in the final performance report. | | | |
| | Every six months, the project director will write progress reports to be distributed to the project team, reviewing what tasks have been accomplished, which activities are in progress, and which activities will be occurring next. | | | |

Timeliness: The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe

At the beginning of the grant, the project director will create a collaborative document with the schedule of activities that can be accessed and reviewed by any team member at any point in the grant period. As tasks are in progress, project staff will keep this document updated with details, obstacles, or anticipated changes to the timeline.