# Inspire Grants for Small Museums Grant Program

September 2023

# Introduction

# Video Chapters

# Using This Video

## Watch
Watch this video in its entirety

## Review
Review the Inspire Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) at **www.imls.gov/grants**

## Refer
Refer to this video as needed

# What is Inspire?

Inspire Grants for Small Museums

# Inspire = Inspire Grants for Small Museums

Inspire! supports projects that strengthen the ability of a **small** museum to serve its public.

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

**Emphasis is on local impact.**


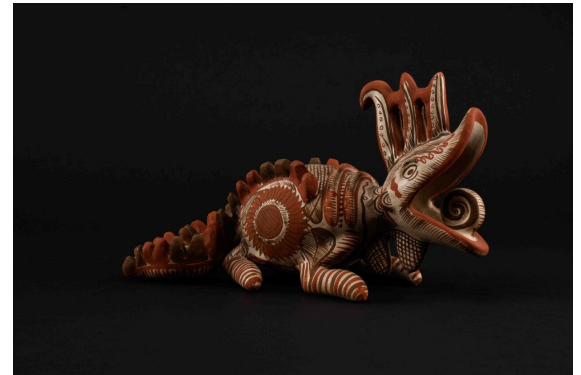
Children's Museum of New Hampshire

# Inspire and Your Strategic Plan

Inspire projects are expected to focus on a key component of your museum's strategic plan.

IMLS wants to support your museum in priority areas that benefit your community.



Art Museum of Southeast Texas

# Inspire is for Museums

- Museums must

  - ✓ Have at least one full time or equivalent professional staff person, either paid or unpaid

  - ✓ Have a physical location that it owns or operates

  - ✓ Have been open to the public for at least 120 days in the year prior to November 15th, 2023

  - ✓ Own or use tangible objects

- Museums may be stand-alone organizations, or they may be part of a larger institution, such as a college, university, Tribe, or a state or local government.

# Inspire is for all Types of Museums

- Aquariums
- Arboretums
- Art museums
- Botanical gardens
- Children's/youth museums
- General museums
- Historic houses/sites
- History museums

- Natural history/ anthropology museums
- Nature centers
- Planetariums
- Science/technology centers
- Specialized museums
- Zoological parks

# What is a Small Museum?

Applicants should think about a range of attributes that describe their organization, such as:

- 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.

# What Can Inspire Fund?

# Inspire Funds Projects


Historic Cherry Hill

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.
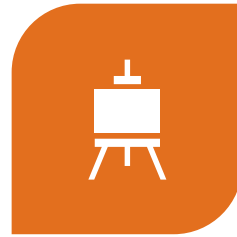
# What Makes an Inspire Project Successful?

INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT

IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE

PROJECT-BASED DESIGN

DEMONSTRABLE RESULTS

# Inspire Program Goal and Objectives

Program Goal: Build the capacity of small museums to provide museum services to their communities.

- **Objective 1:** Support the development of cross-disciplinary learning experiences in small museums.
- **Objective 2:** Support the professional development of the small-museum workforce.
- **Objective 3:** Support the development of policies and institutional plans for small museums.
- **Objective 4**: Support the management and care of collections in small museums.

# Inspire Project Categories

**Lifelong Learning:** IMLS supports the ability of museums to empower people of all ages and backgrounds through experiential and cross-disciplinary learning and discovery.

**Institutional Capacity:** IMLS supports building the capacity of small museums to serve their communities.

**Collections Stewardship and 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.

# Inspire Lifelong Learning

Objective 1: Support the development of cross-disciplinary learning experiences in small museums.

- o Public programs, adult programs, family programs, and early childhood programs.

- o Exhibitions, interpretation, and digital media.

- o In-school and out-of-school programs.

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

# Inspire Institutional Capacity

Objective 2: Support the professional development of the small-museum workforce.

o Recruitment, training, and development of museum staff and volunteers.

Objective 3: Support the development of policies and institutional plans for small museums.

o Foundational organizational policies and procedures, such as Collections Management Policies, Interpretive Plans, and Master Facilities Plans

*Successful Institutional Capacity projects strive to build the capacity of the small museum workforce and the institution itself.*

# Inspire Collections Stewardship and Access

Objective 4: Support the management and care of collections in small museums.

- o Cataloging, inventorying, and registration; collections information management; and collections planning.

- o Conservation and environmental improvement and/or rehousing; conservation surveys; and conservation treatment.

- o Database management, digital asset management, and digitization.

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

# Choosing a Project Category



Lifelong Learning



Institutional Capacity



Collections Stewardship
and 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 skillset 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?

# What Size Are Inspire Projects?
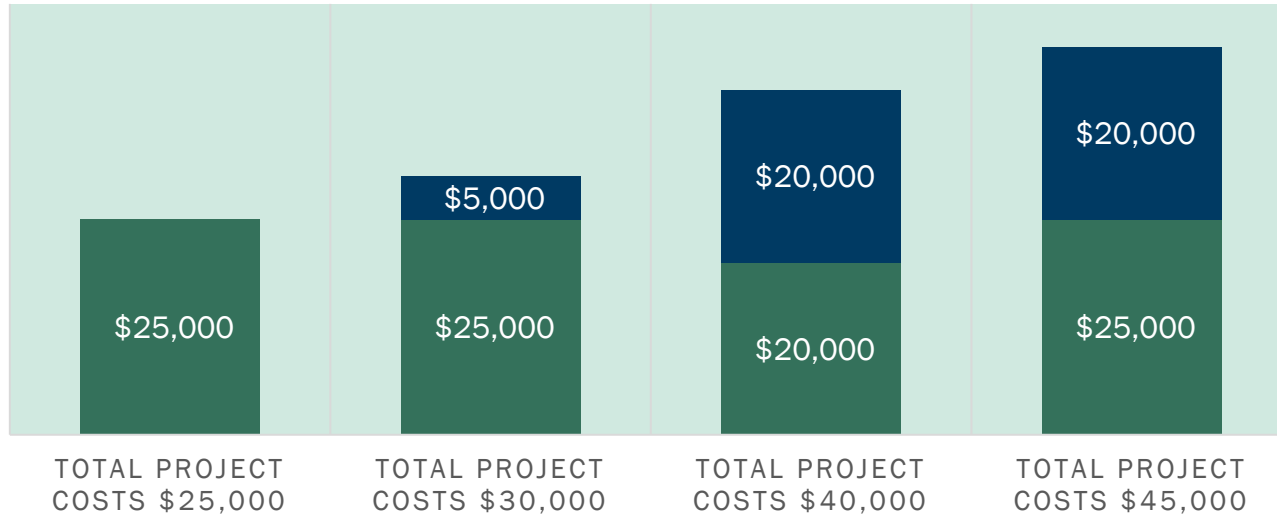
Inspire project budgets can range in size

Small Project: $5,000 - $25,000 in federal grants funds with **no cost share required.**

Large Project: $25,001 - $75,000 in federal grant funds with **1:1 cost share required.**

# Inspire Funding Levels

## SMALL PROJECTS WITH NO OR LESS THAN 1:1 COST SHARE

**Federal Funds**  **Cost Share**
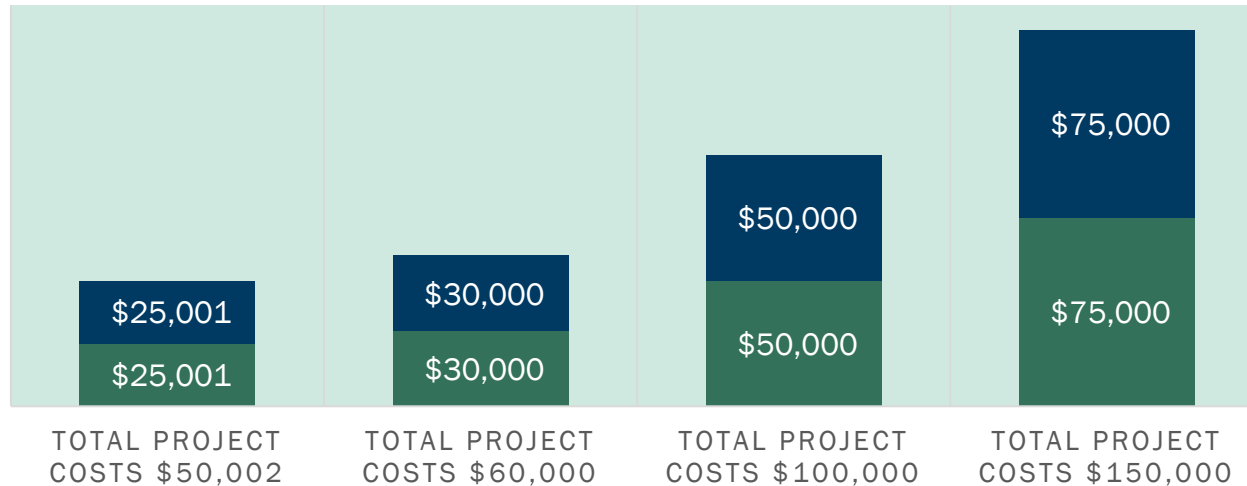


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | $20,000 | $20,000 |
| | $5,000 | | |
| $25,000 | $25,000 | $20,000 | $25,000 |
| TOTAL PROJECT COSTS $25,000 | TOTAL PROJECT COSTS $30,000 | TOTAL PROJECT COSTS $40,000 | TOTAL PROJECT COSTS $45,000 |

# Inspire Funding Levels

## LARGE PROJECTS WITH 1:1 COST SHARE

■ Federal Funds  ■ Cost Share



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| $25,001 (Cost Share) | $30,000 (Cost Share) | $50,000 (Cost Share) | $75,000 (Cost Share) |
| $25,001 (Federal Funds) | $30,000 (Federal Funds) | $50,000 (Federal Funds) | $75,000 (Federal Funds) |
| TOTAL PROJECT COSTS $50,002 | TOTAL PROJECT COSTS $60,000 | TOTAL PROJECT COSTS $100,000 | TOTAL PROJECT COSTS $150,000 |

# How Many Inspire Projects Get Funded?

## INSPIRE AWARDS FY23

- ■ Lifelong Learning
- ■ Institutional Capacity
- ■ Collections Stewardship



44%

17%

39%
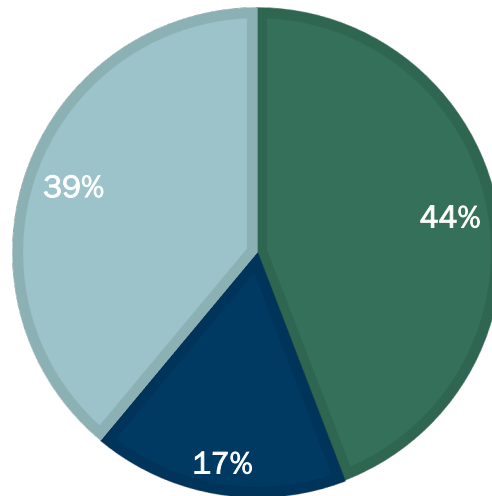
In FY23 IMLS made 77 Inspire awards for a total of $3.4M.

# Application Components

Overview

# Application Components

The Inspire Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) includes a complete list of all the application components.

Most of these components are created and saved as a PDF for uploading as part of your application package in Grants.gov.

# Required Documents

These components are required of __all__ Inspire applications.

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424S)
- IMLS Museum Program Information Form (including Abstract)
- Organizational Profile
- Strategic Plan Summary
- Narrative (5 pages max.)

- Schedule of Completion
- Performance Measurement Plan
- IMLS Budget Form
- Budget Justification
- List of Key Project Staff and Consultants
- Resumes

# 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

- Digital Products Plan

- Detailed Condition Reports and/or Conservation Treatment Proposals

# Supporting Documents

**These components are <u>optional</u> in Inspire applications.** Include only those that supplement the Narrative and support the project description provided in the application.

- Letters of commitment from partners, consultants, or any third-parties you will work with on your project
- 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 projects
- Collections, technology, or other departmental plans applicable to the proposed project
- Web links to relevant online materials
- Needs assessments

# Application Components

In the following sections of this presentation, we will focus on three application components:

- Organizational Profile

- Narrative

- Budget

The Notice of Funding Opportunity offers complete instructions on how to prepare and complete all application components.
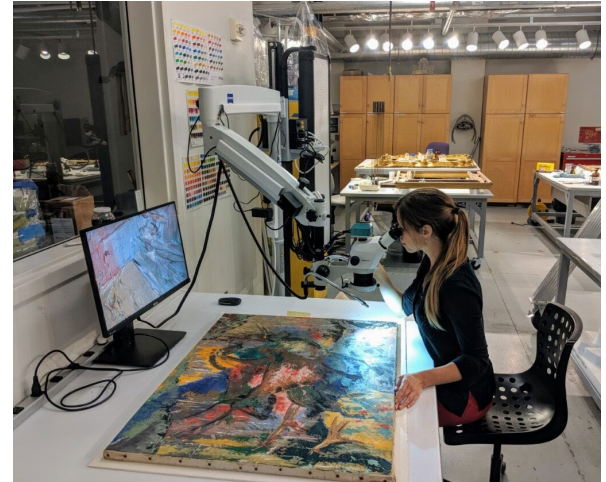
Wright Museum of Art

# Application Components

Organizational Profile

# 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.

# Application Components

Narrative

# Narrative: Project Justification

**Tell us:**

- Which program goal/project category and associated objective(s) of Inspire! Grants for Small Museums will your project address?

- How will your project advance your museum's strategic plan?

- What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?

- Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning?

- Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?

# Narrative: Project Justification

*Reviewers will look for:*

- Has the applicant selected an appropriate program goal/project category and one or more associated objectives of Inspire! Grants for Small Museums?

- Are the ways in which this project advances the museum's strategic plan specific and measurable?

- How well has the applicant used relevant data and best practices to describe the need, problem, or challenge to be addressed?

- Has the applicant appropriately defined the target group(s) and beneficiaries, as applicable, for this work?

- Have the target group and other project stakeholders been involved appropriately in planning the project?

- *For Collections Stewardship and Access projects:* Are the collections and/or records that are the focus of the project and their current condition described and quantified in enough detail?

# Defining a need, problem, or challenge
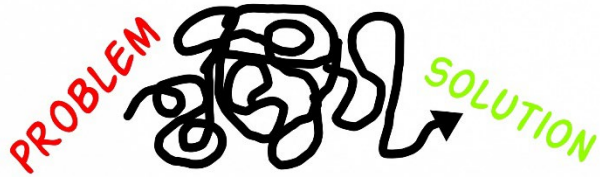
- Remember that the federal government wants its investment to result in something getting better.

- 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.

# Narrative: Project Work Plan

Tell us:

- What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?

- What are the risks to the project and how will you mitigate them?

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

- What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?

- How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?

# Narrative: Project Work Plan

*Reviewers will look for:*

- Are the proposed activities informed by relevant theory and practice?

- Are the goals, assumptions, and risks clearly stated?

- Do the identified staff, partners, consultants, and service providers possess the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully?

- Are the time, financial, personnel, and other resources identified realistic for the scope and scale of the project?

- Is the proposed Performance Measurement Plan likely to generate the required measures of Effectiveness, Efficiency, Quality, and Timeliness?

- If present, does the Digital Products Plan reflect appropriate practices and standards for creating and managing the types of digital products proposed?

- Will the proposed methods for tracking the project's progress toward achieving the intended results allow course adjustments when necessary and result in reliable and measurable information about the results of the project?

# 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.

# 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

- A project may be structured around 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 project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified? Be sure to address this question from the dual perspectives of advancing knowledge and understanding and ensuring that the federal investment made through this grant generates benefits to society.

- How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the target group change as a result of your project?

- What products will result from your project?

- How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance?

- *For Collections Stewardship and Access projects*: How will the care, condition, management, access to, or use of the museum collections and/or associated data that define the focus of your project improve?

# Narrative: Project Results

*Reviewers will look for:*

- Are the project's intended results clearly articulated, realistic, meaningful, and linked to the need, problem, or challenge addressed by the project?

- Is the plan to effect meaningful change in knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes solidly grounded and appropriately structured?

- Is it clear that the federal investment made through this grant will generate identifiable benefits to society?

- Will the products created by the project be made available and accessible to the target group?

- Is the plan to sustain the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance reasonable and practical?

- *For Collections Stewardship and Access projects*: Will the care, condition, management, access to, or use of the museum collections and/or records improve as a result of the project?

# 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.

# Narrative Recap

- Your Narrative has three sections—Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results

- 5-page maximum

- Refer to the review criteria in section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity

# Application Components

Budget

# IMLS Budget Form



The IMLS Budget Form accommodates up to three years of project activities and expenses.

The budget should include the project costs that will be charged to grant funds as well as those that will be supported by cost share (for large projects).

# Allowable Cost Examples

- 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
- program evaluation
- staff and volunteer training
- paid internships/fellowships
- indirect or overhead costs

# Unallowable Cost Examples

- general fundraising costs
- contributions to endowments
- general operating support
- acquisition of collections
- general advertising or public relations costs
- construction or renovation of facilities
- social activities, receptions, or entertainment
- research projects

# Budget Justification

The Budget Justification is in an opportunity to provide in a more a detailed narrative format, an explanation or justification for the project costs itemized in the IMLS Budget Form.

For example:

- In Salaries and Wages, you should identify each person whose salary or wages will be paid with IMLS funds or by cost share. If cost share is being provided by unpaid volunteers, explain how you arrived at the dollar amount used to represent the value of their services.

- In Supplies, Materials and Equipment you should list each type of supply, material, and equipment you propose to purchase or provide as cost share for the project. Provide vendor quotes or price lists as Supporting Documents with your application.

# Application Tips and Next Steps

# Application Tips

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.
- Be sure your application is complete.
- Make sure all application components are in the proper format and follow the correct naming conventions.
- Submit to Grants.gov **early** so you can correct any errors.

# Application Tips

Check your registrations and know your usernames and passwords.



System for Award Management (www.sam.gov)

- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)
- **Registration must be renewed every year!**



Grants.gov (www.grants.gov)

- **Passwords expire every 60 days!**
- Accounts are deactivated after 365 days of inactivity.

**START EARLY, DON'T DELAY**

# Application Tips

Peer reviewers – museum professionals from all types of museums – will be selected by IMLS to read each application and provide constructive and critical comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed projects.

To help make sure your Narrative is as clear and complete as possible:

- Follow the Narrative outline in the Inspire Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- Consider the review criteria associated with section of the Narrative.
- Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections in your Narrative to make it easy for reviewers to read.
- Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon.
- Ask a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit it.

# Important Dates and Times

Applications are due by 11:59 pm EST on **November 15, 2023.**

- Awards will be announced in **August 2024.**

- Projects must start **September 1, 2024.**

# Next Steps

Connect with IMLS Program Staff in the Office of Museum Services to ask questions about the:

- Inspire grant program

- Application Components

- Review Process

https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/inspire-grants-small-museums

Good luck!

# Credit