IMLS Office of Museum Services_ FY2024 Museums Empowered Applicant Informational Video

0:04
Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services Informational video on Museums Empowered Grant Program Applicant Information Session. My name is Mark Isaksen. One of the program staff in the Office of Museum Services is at IMLS and I'll be narrating this presentation for you.

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The goal of this video is to provide an overview of our Museums Empowered Grant program in the process of preparing an application for funding. The video is organized into six chapters. First, is "What is Museums Empowered?". This introductory section explains the purpose of the design of the grant program. Next, is "What can Museums Empowered Grants Fund?". This section provides a detail on the types of projects

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funded in the grant program and the amount of funds that can be requested. Next, is "Application Components and Introduction", which describes the types of documents that are needed to create a grant application. Then next is the "Application Components - Narrative" section, providing guidance on composing the narrative part of the application. Then "Application Components - Budget",

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which provides information on what to include in your project budget and finally, "Application Tips and Next Steps", which offers a few tips and next steps on preparing and submitting your grant application. The complete set of instructions for how to prepare and submit a Museums Empowered grant application are found in the "Notice of Funding Opportunity", published on Grants.gov and available on the IMLS website.

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Please refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the most detailed information on preparing your application. To get the most out of this video, we recommend that you watch it in an entirety. This will give you an understanding of the Museums Empowered grant program, the types of projects that can be funded, and the necessary application components. You may also want to review the Museums Empowered Notice of Funding Opportunity before, during, or after you watch the video.

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Notices of Funding Opportunities, known as NOFOs, are documents that detail the requirements of each of our grant programs. All of them can be found on our website as you navigate the application process. You can use this video as a reference tool, and if you'd like to get to a specific section, please use the time bar or the links in the description box to navigate to a specific chapter.

2:50
In this section, we will answer the question what is Museums Empowered, providing information on the purpose and intent of the grant program and who it is designed to serve. Museums Empowered is a special initiative of the Museums for America or MFA grant program. Now, like MFA, the Museum's Empower grant program is designed to strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public.

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However, what's unique in Museums Empowered is the emphasis on helping your museum tap into the transformative power of professional development and training to generate a systemic change within your museum. These projects are expected to involve multiple levels of staff, leadership, and volunteers in a set of logical interrelated activities tied directly to addressing a key need or challenge in your strategic plan.

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Museums Empowered, sometimes referred to as ME, is a grant program that supports projects that focus on a key component of your museum strategic plan. IMLS wants to help advance something that is a priority for your museum, and hopefully something that will ultimately benefit your community. To help

demonstrate that connection in your grant application, we ask for a summary of your strategic plan, usually no more than two pages.

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So that reviewers will be able to understand how your proposed projects activities will further your institutional goals and objectives. The Strategic Plan Summary is your opportunity to make a thoughtful and well-constructed connection between the proposed project and your museum's priorities. Now, keep in mind that Museums Empowered is a grant program for museums.

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And as a museum, you should keep in mind that all applicants must meet certain requirements to be eligible for federal funding. Your organization must be located in one of the United States, its territories, or the District of Columbia; and your organization must be a unit of state, local or tribal government, or a private nonprofit organization with tax exempt status. Now, if you meet those two requirements, then the next step is to consider what it means to be eligible for IMLS funding as a museum.

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And museums must: have at least one full time or equivalent professional staff, person, 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 the application deadline; and own or use tangible objects. Museums may be stand-alone organizations, or part of a larger institution such as a college, university, tribe, or state or local government.

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And again, ME is a grant program for all types of museums. Now, here's a brief list of some of the types of museums that routinely apply to this grant program. If you have any questions about eligibility, feel free to reach out to a program staff person to talk further about eligibility for the grant program. In this section, we'll answer the question, "What can Museums Empowered grants fund?".

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Writing details on the types of projects and associated goals within the Museums Empowered grant program, as well as offer some summary data on the number and type of projects that were funded last year. Museums Empowered grants are designed to support project-based activities, so let's take a minute to consider exactly what that means. The Project Management Institute has a good definition, which is: a temporary endeavor

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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, and therefore a defined scope and resources. 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.

7:02
So, 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, and therefore defined scope, requiring specific resources which are designed to accomplish a specific, singular goal.

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But keeping our focus on project-based activities, let's look a little further at what characteristics are most often seen in successful Museums Empowered applications. First off is "Institutional Impact". The project uses professional development for staff at multiple levels of the organization with the goal of generating systemic change within a museum. Creating that institutional impact. Next, is "In-Depth Knowledge".

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The project design reflects A thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter. You demonstrate that in the writing of your application narrative. "Project-based Design": the work

consists of a set of logical interrelated activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge. And lastly is "Demonstrable Results". So, your project should generate a measurable result or set of results

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that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address. The successful projects most often exemplify all these four characteristics and fit well within the Museums Empowered grant program. It's been our experience that unfunded applications fail to deliver convincingly on one or more of these areas. Keep these in mind as you're crafting your scope of work and narrative for your application.

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Now, if project-based design and institutional impact are core elements of your idea, then now it's time to consider how your application aligns with the grant program goals and associated objectives. The four Museums Empowered program goals are: First, "Digital Technology":

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providing museum staff with the skills to integrate digital technology into museum operations. Next, "Diversity, Equity Inclusion", which is supporting museum staff in providing inclusive and equitable services to people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as to individuals with disabilities. The third goal is around evaluation.

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To the strengthening and the ability of a museum and its staff to use evaluation as a tool to shape museum programs and improve outcomes. And the last goal is around organizational management, where we want to strengthen and support museum staff as the essential part of a resilient organizational culture. Now let's take a look

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at each goal in a little more detail. Goal One supports projects that provide museum staff with the skills to integrate digital technology into museum operations, and this might involve activities that support staff learning and integration of digital communication platforms and social media tools to enhance audience engagement and community outreach, or it could be activities that support staff learning

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and integration of digital tools and services that enhance access to museum collections, for example. And the emphasis here is on staff learning and integration of these new tools, not just the acquisition of the new tools. Now here's an example of a recently funded project in the digital technology area. The Children's Museum of Indianapolis was awarded $250,000 -- this is back in 2021 --

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to increase its capacities to prepare for and respond to new and evolving cybersecurity threats, including those related to COVID-19 as the public health emergency. Now, we've also made this available as a sample application, with the narrative and schedule available as a PDF on the ILMS website. Now, go to Search Awarded Grants and search by log number to find this entry, or use the hyperlink at the bottom of this slide.

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Here's another example of a digital technology focused project. The Phillips Collection, right here in Washington, DC, was awarded $239,000 -- this is back in 2022 -- to improve staff understanding of digital asset management practices and build consensus around how to best tour these assets.

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So in this project they were putting together a cross departmental staff team to engage in informal and formal training designed to develop skills to allow them to select and roll out the museum's first digital asset management system. Again, this is the link available on our website if you want more information about this project.

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Goal Two focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion and supports projects that help museum staff and providing inclusive and equitable services to people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds and to individuals with disabilities. Now, this might involve activities that create training and learning opportunities that increase cultural competency of museum staff

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or enhance relevancy of museum programs or maybe activities that develop and implement inclusive and equitable fellowship programs or internship programs or mentoring programs that can increase support for emerging professionals from diverse communities entering the museum field. So again, here are some examples of recently funded projects in 2023 we awarded to the Wildlife Conservation Society

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a $250,000 grant to create a new training program, and this is focused on supervisors of internship programs in five New York City wildlife focused parks operated by the Wildlife Conservation Society. That's both in the Bronx Zoo, the Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park and Queens Zoos and the New York Aquarium. And this was a professional development training program,

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which had a multi-part focus on youth development, cultural competency, supervising young adults, mentoring and career support to help the intern supervisors develop the necessary skills to succeed in this important role. Now again, we've made this available as a sample application with the narrative and schedule available as a PDF on the IMLS website and you can also use the hyperlink here to find that.

14:20
And lastly, there was a project to support the Boise Museum of Art in Boise, ID and $191,000, to increase its ability to serve members of its community with disabilities. With an emphasis on the deaf and hard of hearing community, the museum will develop a series of participatory planning processes

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working with consultants, working with community members and ASL interpreters to identify and test tools to make the museum more accessible. Now, Goal Three supports projects that strengthen the ability of museum staff to use evaluation as a tool to shape museum programs and improve outcomes. This might involve activities that increase staff knowledge of program evaluation methods and the usefulness of evaluation reports, tools, data, and metrics.

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More activities that provide museum staff with the tools and strategies to adapt evaluation methods to address a specific audience for institutional need. Here's an example of recently funded project focused on evaluation. This was at the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena, and they were awarded $247,000 this past year to improve the design and outcomes of their youth programs

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by developing a comprehensive approach to use program evaluation, working with the consultant and part time evaluation associate who's going to work with the project team to both engage youth in developing new evaluation protocols, developing new techniques, a multisensory evaluation framework, and then piloting that within the museum.

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Again, this is also available as a sample application with the narrative and schedule available as a PDF on the IM:S website. Another example focused on evaluation is here on screen. It's the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Coral Gables, FL, which was awarded $219,000 to improve the design and outcomes of its programs by developing an institution wide approach to evaluation.

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And essentially creating an evaluation strategic plan that would be comprehensive and serve the entire

organization. Goal Four is about organizational management and is intended to support museum staff as the essential part of a resilient organizational culture. And this might involve activities that help you to develop and implement comprehensive organizational learning opportunities that address

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One or more emerging priorities facing a museum. Or maybe it's activities that you develop and implement programs to address specific learning and growth opportunities that were identified by staff needs assessments. So, it might come upwards from staff through a needs assessment or through the museum itself as priorities based on your planning efforts.

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And some examples of what that looks like: We recently funded in 2023 the Perot Museum of Nature and Science in Dallas, TX, a $209,000 grant to develop a leadership professional development program to help them attract talent and help grow the next generation of museum leaders. Again, this is also available as a sample application with the narrative and schedule available as a PDF on the IMLS S website.

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Another example here was at the Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco ordered a grant in 2022 for $199,000 to strengthen staff, leadership and training as part of a succession plan, and an external consultant was going to work with the museum director to facilitate project activities, beginning with assessment of staff strengths.

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And then creating training opportunities and growth opportunities for staff at all levels of the organization. And finally, this example from the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. They were rewarded a grant in 2022 for $211,000 to develop a training program for emerging leaders in the museum. Again, 6 cohorts, 12 staff members are going to participate in a 12-week training program.

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Working with training specialists and working on leadership skills. Again, this is building leadership from within the organization. Now, projects should fit within one of these 4 grant program goals, and sometimes there's an overlap in the kinds of activities that you're proposing, and it might make it difficult to select one program goal. So here's some strategies to help you select a goal that aligns best with your project.

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Think about what's at the center of your project. Who's going to benefit? What will be improved once you've finished your project? Decide who you want to review your application. Also think about what kind of skill sets and experience you want them to have. Maybe you want to list the activities that you plan to carry out and assign to each goal and figure out which goal gets the most and where will the most resources be spent.

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Why is your decision about which goal to choose so important? Well, because it impacts the review process. Mostly because your application will be likely to be reviewed by museum professionals who have experience and expertise that's aligned with one of those goals. And your application will also be competing or be compared to other applications that have chosen the same goal.

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Our advice is to choose one program goal and write your proposal accordingly. Regardless of the program goals selected, all Museums Empowered project budgets must stay within a specific range of funding. Your project budget can request the minimum of $5,000 to a maximum of $250,000 in federal funds. If you ask for less than five or more than 250,000 in federal grant funds,

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your application may be rejected. And remember to keep your budget aligned to the scope and scale of your project, including all costs necessary to complete the proposed activities. Now, in this grant program,

the budgets are required to have at least a one-to-one non-federal cost share. So, here are a few examples to illustrate the point. If your total project budget was $100,000 --

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all the activities, all the cost -- total project budget $100,000 -- then you'd be able to request $50,000 in federal grant fund and a cost share of at least $50,000 and that would comprise your entire budget for the project of $100,000. So, say your total project budget was $300,000, so you'd be able to ask for $150,000 in federal grant funds and then provide a cost year of at least $150,00.

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And if your total project budget was $500,000 -- well, you would be able to request up to $250,000 in federal grant funds and provide a cost share of at least $250,000. And remember, cost share can take a number of forms. Among them are cash, staff, time, volunteer time, third party contributions, grants from foundations, support from state of local government.

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Cost shared just can't be from another federal source. Now, the amount of applications received and the amount of awards made can vary from year to year. And here's a snapshot of our most recent application and award cycle. In 2023, IMLS made 19 Museums Empowered awards for a total of about $3.8 million.

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We received 53 applications last year, resulting in 36% of those applications being funded. Now, about 47% of the awards were for projects supporting the diversity and inclusion goal, 26% of the projects supported the organizational management goal, 16% supported evaluation goal and 11% were in digital technology.

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Now, the number of awards in each category is proportional to the number of applications received in each category. The average amount of federal funds for each project was $202,000. Now, on the IMLS website, you can use the Search Awarded Grants function to explore our archive and grants that we have rewarded in past years. Now, there are currently 155 Museums and Power awards listed here

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including those just announced in August. You can search the database using a variety of criteria such as institution name, location, and keyword. Your search will retrieve basic information about each award, including the amount of federal funds awarded in a brief description of the proposed activities and expected results for each project. In this section, we're going to introduce the components of a Museums Empowered grant application

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and provide an overview about the Required, Conditionally Required and Supporting Documents. The Museums Empowered Notice of Funding Opportunity or NOFO, includes a complete list of all the application components. Most of these are created by applicants and saved as a PDF for uploading as part of your application package at Grants.gov. The table of application components starting on page 7,

24:35
Section D28 of the NOFO lists which application components are required as well as those that are conditionally required; and, for example, some components are included in the application depending on the type of applicant or the type of project. Now, aside from the SF424S and the IMLS Museum Program Information form, which are completed in Grants.gov, all application components must be submitted as PDF documents.

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So, these are the required documents. All applications must include the documents listed here. Omission of even just one may result in your application being rejected. Also, important to note, there is a 7-page limit for the narrative. If you exceed the page limit specified in the NOFO, we must remove the extras before your application goes out for review.

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So, that means your reviewer may see a paragraph or sentence end in midair and will wonder about where the rest of it is. So, make sure your content fits into the page limit specified and make sure the number of pages holds when you convert your document to a PDF. The second category of application components is that of conditionally required documents.

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Some applications must include one, two or even all of these, and it's your job to figure out which are required for your application. Now, if you're applying as a nonprofit, then you must include your proof of nonprofit status issued by the Internal Revenue Service, the IRS. We will not accept the letter of state sales tax exemption as proof. It has to be the IRS determination letter.

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If you are using a federally negotiated indirect cost rate in your budget, then you must include a copy of your final grade agreement. And if you're going to create digital products during the course of your project, then you must complete and submit a digital products plan. So, just like the required documents, omitting one of these may result in your application being rejected.

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Now, for the Digital Products plan, you might want to note that the term digital product includes any digitized or born digital content, resource or asset or any software. So, if you're creating any of these materials, be sure to look at the instructions in the NOFO on how to create a Digital products plan and which questions you need to answer. The third group of application components

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is supporting documents now. Supporting documents are optional. You may submit one or none. Include only those items that will supplement your proposal. This is not the place to introduce brand new information, but it's an opportunity to provide documents that support your project justification, your work plan, and your project results listed in your narrative, as well as, you know, supporting information for your budget justification, for example.

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So, maybe you've identified a partner whose involvement is key to the project success. So, a letter of support or commitment will go a long way to reassuring reviewers that they are on board and the project will succeed. With this, you know, partner that you've identified. You can also provide pictures, if you need, by your institution or other kinds of information and background about research that's helped develop

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your project ideas that are listed in your narrative. Even vendor quotes or specifications from consultants helps to show that you've done some of the legwork in getting appropriate estimates for project costs. And we recommend that you be respectful of your reviewer's time and avoid any temptation to include hundreds of pages of extraneous material. So, be judicious in

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your selection of supporting documents and it may help make or break your application. Include what is important, what's helpful, and what's directly relevant to your project, and stop there. In the following sections of this presentation, we're going to focus on these specific application components: the narrative and the budget.

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You can always go to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for complete instructions on how to prepare and complete all of the application components. And in this section, we're going to go over the questions you'll need to answer in your project narrative and offer details on the review criteria associated with each section.

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So, let's talk about the narrative of your proposal. You have seven pages to cover three very important issues; and the Notice of Funding Opportunity provides lengthy guidance on what the narrative should cover. First, is the "Project Justification". We're going to ask you to tell us what need, problem or challenge your project will address and how it was identified. So, describe how you have used

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demographic information or other relevant data to define the need, problem, or challenge. We're going to ask you who's the target group for your project and how they have been involved. Target group refers to those who will be most immediately and positively affected by your projects. You might want to identify the number of individuals in the group.

30:39
And also talk about who are the ultimate beneficiaries. And beneficiaries refer to those who are likely to be aided in the long term by your project. And it's maybe the same as your target group, but it could be slightly different. And you want to identify who these people are. Keep in mind that there there's review criteria that each reviewer be looking at, and this is found in Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

31:15
And this is a list of questions that reviewers are asked to consider when they review your proposal. And it's a good idea to refer to these as you craft your narrative to be certain you are providing reviewers clear, solid information. Now, you'll see that these questions respond pretty directly with the prompts that you're given to write your narrative. Most importantly here for Museums Empowered, we want to make sure that the project activities

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are designed to use professional development and training to generate systemic change within the museum. One of the prompts in the project justification section of the narrative talks about the need, problem or challenge, and how to identify. So, keep in mind that the federal government wants to invest in something and see that something's going to get better.

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So, as you define your need, problem, or challenge, you want to articulate what will get better as a result of your project. Such as, will someone learn something, develop a skill, or change an attitude maybe. So, you want to identify why it's important that this change happens and really think through your problem definition carefully in succinct terms.

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And gather and present data that supports your problem definition that you've outlined in your justification. In the "Project Work Plan", we're talking about who, what, when, and how. So,

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here we're saying who's going to do what activities when, and using what resources? You should explain how you will track your progress toward achieving your intended results; and what you'll do if you need to correct course. And we also ask you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project, and to tell us how you've taken them into account of your planning. One thing to keep in mind here is

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in the Museums Empowered project, we're going to want to know how you are going to organize and structure the project team to support equitable and inclusive engagement of all participants. The list of review questions in Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity are copied here on this slide. These are the same questions we asked reviewers to consider when they review your proposal.

34:12
So, you want to make sure your narrative is answering these effectively. I'm going to dive a little deeper into one of the questions, which is about risk. When we asked you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project, it means to tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning. So, think of this as answering the question, what if? There's no checklist of risks, but every project has them.

34:44
And 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, think about what could go wrong. Focus on the ones where your experience, both of your own experience or that of the staff at your museum -- where you're like, "Oh yeah, that could happen." And identify steps that you would take in response.

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Now, we know things go differently than expected, and we just want you to prepare by identifying any implementable options. So, here are some examples of risk. A project may be dependent upon fundraising to generate the cost-share, but if it's not complete by the time the application is submitted, what's the institution going to do if the funds aren't available by the time the project starts?

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Or say a project's going to plan to conduct listening sessions with staff. What if staff feedback suggests different needs, issues, or challenges? Which should be the priority for training? Maybe a project is going to be using university interns? And what happens if one or more interns drop out? How do you replace them mid-project? Or maybe the project is going to involve some key partners to achieve success, but maybe one of them drops out mid-project. What do you do?

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Yeah, just want you to think about these things, and if they're likely to happen or possibly going to happen, you know, we want to talk about them in the narrative. The third section of your narrative should be devoted to articulating your project's intended results, and this section is your chance to convince the reviewers that your project will result in something getting better.

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The need or problem you identified in your project justification will be addressed directly, diminished somehow, or maybe improved in some way. Now, we ask you to tell us what data you're going to collect and report in order to measure your project success. If your project will generate some sort of tangible product, this is also the chance to describe

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what that is, you know, if it's a new training materials or curriculum, or a database or something. And last but not least, we ask that you tell us how you will sustain the benefit of the project, particularly, beyond the period of performance. Again, here's a list of the review questions that reviewers are asked to consider, which are also found in Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. All of your project's results should tie back

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to your need, problem or challenge. There might be some tangential benefits or positive outcomes, and you can also list those two. But really focus on results. What do you expect is going to happen when this project is completed? We often hear that defining intended results and success measures is a challenge for applicants, so it's worth spending a bit of time on this here.

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So, you know, think back to the question we referenced before when we talked about defining the need problem or challenge. And if you said someone's going to learn something -- how will you know? And if you want to generate systemic change in your museum -- how's that going to be measured? This focus on results and measuring success in a meaningful way is not a new concept, but

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there has been a lot of work done in the field about ways to measure success. So, for you as an applicant though, we encourage you to consider using maybe a logic model, or an outcome spaced evaluation tool, or some other rubric to explain your intended results and your plan to achieve them. So, to recap, your narrative has three sections: "Project Justification",

38:56
"Project Work Plan", and "Project Results". You have 7 pages for it. The sections are all equally important. You might clearly address what we asked you to do address. Keep an eye on those review criteria. We're telling you in the NOFO and here in this presentation exactly what the reviewers will look for. So, you know, make it as easy as possible for them to find the information they need and to understand it.

39:26
Next, in this section, we're going to: provide information on what to include in your project budget and budget justification; and provide some examples of allowable and unallowable costs. An important component of your application is the budget, and this is the part of the application where you specify all the costs associated with your proposed project. The budget consists of two required components:

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the "IMLS Budget Form"; and the "Budget Justification". The "IMLS Budget Form" is a fillable PDF that accommodates up to three years of project activities and expenses. The budget should include the project cost that will be charged to grant funds as well as those that will be supported by cost-share. In-kind contributions to cost-share may include the value of services, such as donated volunteer or consulting time.

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You can also include equipment donated to the project that happens between the authorized start and end dates of your project. All the items listed, whether supported by grant funds or cost share, must be necessary to accomplish project objectives. They need to be allowable according to the applicable federal cost principles, auditable, and incurred during the award period of performance.

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The "IMLS Budget Form" can be downloaded directly from the IMLS website, and a screenshot of that is visible here on this slide. As you develop your budget, keep in mind that there are certain costs that are either allowable or unallowable according to federal regulations. The allowability of a cost item for all

41:16
federal grants are specified in the Code of Federal Regulations, also known as CFR; and particularly "2 CFR 200", for short. But the full title is, "Title 2, Subtitle A, Chapter II, Part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards". Now, you can look up the "2 CFR 200" and use that as a basis.

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But we've also developed a short list of allowable costs that are most common in the grant applications that come into this program. The Notice of Funding Opportunity includes a partial list of the most common examples as well as this short list, which is shown on the slide. These are costs that may be part of what you asked IMLS to pay for with federal funds. These are costs that are allowable as cost-share as well.

42:10
Rules about allowability apply equally to grant funds as well as cost-share. Now, when completing your project budget, be sure to check that all the costs you include, whether grant funds or cost share, are allowable. There are also some costs which are unallowable, and according to the federal regulations, in "2 CFR 200" they tell us which ones are unallowable.

42:41
In the Notice of Funding Opportunity, we provided an abbreviated list of these costs and also on this slide. Unallowable costs may not be part of what you asked for us to pay for, nor can they be part of what you will pay for as part of your cost-share. In fact, unallowable costs can't show up anywhere in your proposal. So, as you prepare your application, check your list of proposed expenses.

43:10
against our list of unallowable and allowable costs. And if you have any specific questions, please contact

us and we'll be happy to help. In addition to the budget form, you will also prepare a budget justification. This is an opportunity to provide in a more detailed narrative format, an explanation or justification for the project costs.

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Budget justification should be written to follow the cost categories in the IMLS budget form. In the justification you will identify each expense, show the method of cost computation used to determine each amount, and include any that you may have consolidated or summarized on the IMLS budget form. So, in other words, this is the document where you're going to show your math. For example, in the sections under "Salaries and Wages",

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you're going to identify each person whose salary or wage will be paid with IMLS funds, or by cost-share, or contributed by cost-share. And by their names, describe their role in the project. And you want to document the method of cost computation by including the base salary or wages for each person, percentage of time that they're allocating to the project, number of days, or percentage or hours.

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If cost-share is being provided by unpaid volunteers, you're going to explain how you arrived at the dollar amount used to represent the value of their services. Here's another example, in "Supplies, Materials, and Equipment", you should list each type of supply, material and equipment you propose to purchase, or that you're going to provide as cost-share for the project. Detail the number and unit for each item. Explain how you arrived at the dollar amounts.

45:06
You may also provide vendor quotes or price lists and supporting documents with your application. Now, in this final section of the presentation, we offer some application tips and next steps. We only make grants to eligible applicants that submit complete applications, including attachments on or before the deadline. So here are some tips to help you do just that. For starter,

45:35
By watching this informational video, you're off to a good start. Become familiar with Grants.gov's workspace. There are many good features there, such as the opportunity to collaborate with others in creating your application, as well as a validation process that allows you to correct errors prior to submission. Tutorials are available on Grants.gov. Be sure your application is complete. Check it against the table of application components in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

46:06
Make sure all application components are in the proper format and follow the correct naming conventions and submit your application in Grants.gov well before the deadline, so you can correct any errors and avoid any issues created by technology challenges. It's important to get your application submitted online to Grants.gov before the deadline. We don't accept applications by mail or e-mail.

46:35
So, in order to submit your application on Grants.gov, you must have an active SAM document registration and a "Unique Entity Identifier" number. Make sure your registrations for both of these sites are complete, your accounts are active, and any passwords are up to date. These registrations expire periodically, so don't wait until it's time to hit the submit button to check on that. You should coordinate with any other staff in your organization, such as your

47:04
authorized representative who may hold the accounts and passwords you'll need to submit in Grants.gov Both SAM.gov and Grants.gov websites have pretty robust help features as well as FAQ's and information online. Now, if you run into a technical issue with either of these sites, be sure to contact the help desk, their help desk by phone or message; and request a tracking number or case number or ticket number

47:34

so that you can document your issue and attempts at resolving it. Failure to have an active SAM.gov or Grants.gov registration by the application deadline is not an excuse for submitting a late application, so be sure to start early. Now, there are many components that make up the entire application. We've talked about some of those in this presentation, but the narrative is an essential and critical part of the package. Peer reviewers

48:02
Museum professionals from all types of museums will be selected by IMLS to read each application and provide constructive comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed projects. They also base their reviews only on the information contained in the application. So, don't assume that a reviewer or IMLS will know something about your museum or your proposed project to help make sure your narrative is as clear and complete as possible.

48:32
Revisit the Notice of Funding Opportunity and follow the narrative outline it provides. Use headings and subheadings or numbered sections in your narrative to make it easy for reviewers to read and follow along. Be sure to consider the review criteria associated with each applicable section of the narrative.

48:53
Try to avoid generalities and acronyms and jargon in your narrative. The people who are going to review your application are museum professionals, but they may not be totally familiar with your particular shorthand, so make it easy for them to understand what you mean. And an advantage to starting your application early is that you can ask colleagues to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit. So, ask them to act like a reviewer who's seeing this for the first time.

49:23
We have also posted the narrative and scheduled completion from six successful applications from 2023 and to find these examples, go to the "Sample Applications" page on the IMLS website. Scroll down the page to find the Museums Empowered examples, and each sample application PDF contains a copy of the seven-page narrative and also the scheduled completion.

49:48
Many of these samples were identified by our peer reviewers as good examples of well-written applications that provided all the essential information necessary for them to review the application. So, looking at these proposals might help clarify your thinking. Here are a few dates to keep in mind. Applications must be received through Grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on November 15th, 2023.

50:16
Your application will be time stamped by the Grants.gov system, At the application deadline, IMLS staff will review your application for completeness and eligibility, and you may hear from us by e-mail if there's any problems or questions. Next, we will select experienced and knowledgeable peer reviewers to read your application and provide scores and comments based on the criteria of the NOFO. IMLS staff will examine your budget and financials and track your track record with any past or current grants.

50:45
And we then prepare materials for the IMLS Deputy Director for Museums and the IMLS Director. And by law, the IMLS Director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions. And this program happens in July. In early August 2024, we will notify you by e-mail of the award decisions and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers. All Museums Empowered projects must be scheduled to start

51:15
on the first day of September 2024. So, in conclusion, as you read through the Notice of Funding Opportunity and prepare your application, additional questions may arise before the application deadline. We can help you with learning more about the Museums Empowered grant program or other grant programs at IMLS. We can help you address any specific concerns with the various application components

51:45
or to understand the review process. Now, feel free to contact IMLS program staff by e-mail or phone. Our contact information is listed on the Grant Program landing page on the IMLS website. You may also schedule a counseling call to meet directly with the program staff and use the links found on the Grant Program landing page to find an available time slot on our calendar. You'll then receive an e-mail with a calendar invite and Microsoft Teams meeting link.

52:15
Thank you very much for your time and attention today and best of luck in preparing and submitting your grant application to IMLS. Thank you.