



Panel Reviewer Handbook

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Office of Museum Services
Fiscal Year 2024

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Welcome!

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a peer reviewer for this year's Inspire! Grants for Small Museums program. We hope you find this to be a rewarding experience and draw satisfaction from helping small museums across the country create engaging learning environments, address the needs of their communities, and serve as trusted stewards of the collections they hold in trust for the public. Your contribution of time and expertise will be invaluable to IMLS and to the applicants who will receive your comments.

In this handbook, you will find the information you need to carry out panel review, including information about the program, tips for writing effective comments, and three appendices with important reference material. Instructions for using eGMS Reach, IMLS's grants management system, are accessible in the [How to Review Applications in eGMS Reach](#) job aid.

If you have any questions about this material or the processes described, please do not hesitate to contact your panel chair at any time.

Once again, thank you for the service you are about to render to museums and communities throughout the nation.

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums Overview

Introduction

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums (Inspire) is a special initiative of the Museums for America grant program. It is designed to support small museums of all disciplines in project-based efforts to serve the public through exhibitions, educational/interpretive programs, digital learning resources, policy development and institutional planning, technology enhancements, professional development, community outreach, audience development, and/or collections management, curation, care, and conservation.

Projects are expected to:

- Focus on a key goal identified in the institution's strategic plan;
- Reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter; and
- Generate measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge addressed.

IMLS does not define what a "small" museum is. Rather, IMLS invites applicants to consider whether their organization is a good fit for this special initiative for small museums. Applicants were asked to think about a range of attributes that describe their organization, including, but not limited to:

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

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums Goals and Objectives

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums has a single program goal and four objectives associated with it. Each applicant should align their proposed project with one or more of the associated objectives. The choice of objective(s) should be identified clearly in the Narrative ([see Section D2c of the Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)). The choice of objective also informs the choice of project category (i.e., Lifelong Learning, Institutional Capacity, and Collections Stewardship and Access), which is requested in the IMLS Museum Program Information Form.

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.

Funding Amounts

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums requests for IMLS funds may range from \$5,000 to \$75,000, including both direct and indirect costs. There are two funding levels and they differ in cost share requirement.

- Small projects requesting between \$5,000 and \$25,000 in federal grant funds do not require a cost share.
- Large projects requesting between \$25,001 and \$75,000 must include at least a 1:1 cost share from non-federal sources.

Step-by-Step Instructions for Reviewers

At this stage, IMLS has screened applications only for institutional eligibility and application completeness. Field reviewers have assessed the proposals based on the review criteria in the [FY 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#). We are counting on you to determine how good a job each applicant does in:

- meeting the goal and objectives of the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums program, and
- presenting a clear justification for the project, detailing the project workplan, and articulating the project results.

Step 1: Sign in to eGMS Reach

eGMS Reach is IMLS's platform that you will use to access and review applications. To access eGMS Reach, users are required to have an account through Login.gov to securely access information. You will receive an email with the subject line "eGMS Reach Account Information" that includes a link to the reviewer portal. If you do not receive such an email, please check your junk folder. If you still do not see the email, contact imls-museumreviewers@imls.gov.

Once you have the email, please visit <https://grants.imls.gov/Reach/> and follow the instructions located in the [How to Use Login.gov to Access eGMS Reach](#) Job Aid to create a Login.gov account or link your email to an existing Login.gov account.

Instructions for navigating eGMS Reach are available in the [How to Review Applications in eGMS Reach Job Aid](#), which is accessible on the IMLS website here: <https://imls.gov/grants/peer-review/reviewer-resources/museum-reviewer-resources>

Step 2. Consider Panel Review Criteria and Read Applications

We recommend that you begin by reviewing the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums [FY 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#), which guided applicants in creating their applications. This document is also available in the "Shared Files for all Panel Participants" section of the Files and Forms tab in eGMS Reach. Then, read the applications, keeping in mind the panel review criteria below. You do not need to reference each bullet point in your comments, but these questions should guide your thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of each application.

Panel Review Criteria for Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Goal

The Inspire! Grants for Small Museums (Inspire) funding opportunity builds the capacity of small museums to provide museum services to their communities.

Does the project meet the goal of the selected Inspire objective?

- Lifelong Learning projects: Support the development of cross-disciplinary learning experiences in small museums.
- Institutional Capacity projects: Support the professional development of the small-museum workforce. Support the development of policies and institutional plans for small museums.
- Collections Stewardship and Access projects: Support the management and care of collections in small museums.

Implementation

Is the project poised for successful implementation?

- Demonstrates thorough understanding of relevant issues and current practices
- Addresses an identified need
- Allocates resources for the successful completion of the project
- Connects goals and objectives to appropriate activities and intended outcomes

Results

If funded, will the project achieve its intended results?

- Tracks, measures, and adapts in order to achieve desired outcomes
- Generates continuing benefits for applicant and/or audience served

About Organization Size

Applicants were asked to consider whether their organization is a good fit for this special initiative for small museums and discuss a range of attributes that describe their organization. These could include, but were not limited to, number of staff members and volunteers; estimate of total person-hours worked per week; operating budget and sources of revenue; number and types of objects in the collection; size of facility and property; types and numbers of audiences served; and size relative to other organizations of the same discipline, or within the same geographic region. Please look for this discussion in the Organizational Profile, the Museum Program Information Form, and Narrative sections of each application and compare it to the Program Description in the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (pages 2-3). Please indicate whether the organization made the case that it is a small museum by selecting one of the following sentences in the evaluation form in eGMS Reach:

Option 1: Yes, the applicant makes a convincing case that the organization qualifies as a small museum.

Option 2: No, the applicant does not make a convincing case that the organization qualifies as a small museum.

Step 3. Draft Comments

For each application you review, we ask you to write a constructive and substantive comment for each of the panel review criteria: **Goals**, **Implementation**, and **Results**. All three areas have equal weight and are equally important in identifying the overall strengths and weaknesses of an application.

You may wish to prepare your comments in a separate document for later copying and pasting into the eGMS Reach evaluation form.

When drafting your comments...

- Take all the review criteria questions for each section into consideration. It is not necessary to restate the review criteria questions in your comments.
- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Judge the application on its own merits, and do not base your evaluation on any prior knowledge of an institution.
- Make sure your comments justify the scores you provide. A highly complementary comment does not remove the sting of a low score, and a negative comment does not

even out a high one. Comments and scores must complement each other and make sense as a whole.

- Review new and resubmitted proposals using the same criteria.

Characteristics of effective and poor reviewer comments:

Effective comments...	Poor comments...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are presented in a constructive manner. • are both substantive and easy to read and understand. • reflect the resources of the institution. • are specific to the individual application. • reflect the numeric score assigned. • highlight the application’s strengths and identify areas for improvement. • are directed to applicants—not IMLS or panel reviewers—for their use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simply summarize or paraphrase the applicant’s own words. • make derogatory remarks. • penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money. • offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information. • compare the application to others in the review group. • make vague or overly general statements. • question an applicant’s honesty or integrity.

See Appendix C for examples of effective comments, as they appear to applicants.

What should not be considered in your reviews

Sometimes reviewers ask about or mention characteristics that are outside the scope of the Inspire review criteria. This is a list of commonly identified factors that you should NOT consider when reading proposals:

- An institution’s financial or staffing needs
- Whether a project is innovative
- Whether a project is new or a resubmission
- An institution’s indirect cost rate. IMLS honors indirect cost rate agreements that an institution has negotiated with another federal agency, or accepts the 10% rate in the absence of a negotiated agreement

Bias in the Review Process

Everyone has biases, which are informed by our own experiences as well as our cultural and social environments. Recognizing this is an important step in mitigating the effects of bias in your reviews. The chart below shows different types of bias that commonly happen in the review process. Think about what may feel familiar as you review applications.

AFFINITY BIAS	CONFIRMATION BIAS	CONFORMITY BIAS	CONTRAST EFFECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Favoring those like you Applicants who “speak the lingo” get less scrutiny and higher scores Seen as more believable/trustworthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing on information that aligns with preconceived notions Rejecting ideas or actions that challenge held notions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tendency to be swayed by the majority OR loudest voices Can lead to false consensus and dampening of multiple perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluating quality and other characteristics relative to its surroundings (e.g., other applications in review group) rather than on its own merits Can result in unfair assessment of risk and capacity

As you review, pay attention to your preferences—for example, a project may be well conceived and ready to implement even if the narrative is poorly formatted or has spelling errors. We all have biases, but staying aware of your preferences and what makes you feel comfortable can interrupt your bias and help ensure that every application is reviewed fairly.

Example Biased Comments

The following comments contain bias	Explanation
"I couldn't figure out what this project was about because the narrative was filled with spelling mistakes that were enormously distracting." Score 2	Comment demonstrates affinity bias.
"While it's important that museums connect with their communities, they should not be the lead for social service projects like a food bank in the museum. That type of work is not mission critical for museums." Score 3	Comment demonstrates confirmation bias.
The project timeline seems ambitious, especially since two key partners aren't identified/confirmed. That said, MUSEUM NAME is one of the top art museums in the US, and I'm sure they'll be able to make this happen. Score 5	Comment demonstrates conformity bias.
"The risks identified in the narrative were not as realistic and robust as those I read in other proposals." Score 4	Comment demonstrates contrast effect bias.

Step 4: Assign Scores

Assign a single preliminary score for the overall project keeping all three areas of the review criteria in mind. Use a scale of 1 to 5, as described in the Scoring Definitions chart.

Scoring Definitions

Score	Rank	Description
5	Exceptional	The application is outstanding and provides exceptional support for the proposed project.
4	Very Good	The application provides solid support for the proposed project.
3	Good	The application is adequate but could be strengthened in its support for the proposed project.
2	Some Merit	The application is flawed and does not adequately support the proposed project. The project proposal could be revised and strengthened for a future submission.
1	Poor	The application does not fit the program goals, is inadequate, or provides insufficient information to allow for a confident evaluation.

Strive to bring the same approach to all the applications you review. Evaluate each application using the criteria in the guidelines and in the Reviewer Resources—not against other proposals. It is theoretically possible for you to have been assigned all “Exceptional” proposals, or all “Poor” proposals, meaning that you could arrive at all very high scores or very low scores. You do not need to evaluate on a curve of any kind.

Step 5: Review Your Work

IMLS is one of the few federal agencies that provides reviewers’ comments to applicants, directly and in their entirety without editing. We do this to make sure our process is as transparent as possible, and to provide anonymous feedback to applicants from their peers. If an applicant is unsuccessful, then they may use these comments to improve their proposal for resubmission. If they are successful, they may use the comments to improve their funded projects.

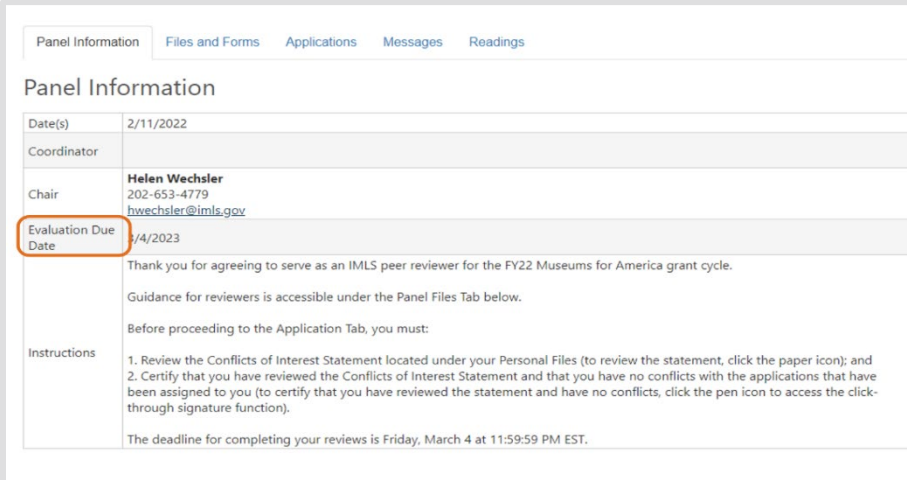
We hear repeatedly that getting your comments is one of the most highly valued things about IMLS museum grant programs, therefore, review your draft comments and preliminary scores. Adjust your scores, if necessary, to reflect your written evaluation more accurately. Scores should support comments, and comments should justify scores.

See Appendix C for examples of effective comments.

Step 6: Enter scores and Comments by the Evaluation Due Date

When you are ready to enter your scores and comments, visit <https://grants.imls.gov/Reach/> and sign in with your Login.gov account. Refer to the [How to Review Applications in eGMS Reach Job Aid](#) for instructions on completing comments and selecting scores.

Your reviews must be completed and entered in eGMS Reach by the **Evaluation Due Date** listed in the Panel Information tab in eGMS Reach.



Panel Information	
Date(s)	2/11/2022
Coordinator	
Chair	Helen Wechsler 202-653-4779 hwechsler@imls.gov
Evaluation Due Date	3/4/2023
Instructions	<p>Thank you for agreeing to serve as an IMLS peer reviewer for the FY22 Museums for America grant cycle.</p> <p>Guidance for reviewers is accessible under the Panel Files Tab below.</p> <p>Before proceeding to the Application Tab, you must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review the Conflicts of Interest Statement located under your Personal Files (to review the statement, click the paper icon); and2. Certify that you have reviewed the Conflicts of Interest Statement and that you have no conflicts with the applications that have been assigned to you (to certify that you have reviewed the statement and have no conflicts, click the pen icon to access the click-through signature function). <p>The deadline for completing your reviews is Friday, March 4 at 11:59:59 PM EST.</p>

Screenshot: Panel Information tab illustrating where to find the Evaluation Due Date.

Step 7: Manage Your Copies

Keep your applications and any notes until **August 31, 2024**, in case there are questions from IMLS staff. Continue to maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review by keeping electronic and paper copies in a secure place. After August 31, 2024, delete electronic copies and shred paper copies of the applications and notes.

Appendix A: Confidentiality and Application and Review Process

Confidentiality

The information contained in grant applications is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions' project activities, or any other information contained in the applications. Because AI generative tools rely upon the submission of substantial information, and because AI users are unable to control where the information they have submitted will be sent, saved, viewed, or used in the future, IMLS explicitly prohibits its peer reviewers from using AI tools to analyze and critique IMLS grant applications.

While funded applications become a matter of record, IMLS does not release information about applications that are not funded through our programs, nor do we share peer reviewers' names or other identifiable information. You may share that you have served as an IMLS peer reviewer, but do not share details about the program in which you're working or the applications you're considering. This applies to communications that are in person, in email, and through all forms of social media.

Application and Review Process

The success of IMLS grant programs depends upon the quality of its peer review process, through which hundreds of reviewers consider thousands of eligible applications fairly, candidly, and impartially in order to make recommendations for funding each year. Below is a summary of the process from application submission through award announcements.

1. Organizations submit their applications electronically using [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), the central portal of the United States government for receipt of electronic applications.
2. IMLS receives the applications, and staff members check them for organizational eligibility and application completeness.
3. IMLS staff members identify a pool of available peer reviewers with appropriate expertise. Peer review takes place in one or two tiers, depending on the grant program: field review, panel review, or both. Each complete application submitted by an eligible organization typically receives between three and six reviews.
4. For the applications ranked most highly by peer reviewers, IMLS staff members carefully assess the budgets and past organizational performance.
5. IMLS staff members provide a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director.
6. The IMLS Director makes all final funding decisions.
7. IMLS notifies all applicants whether they have received an award. With their notifications, all applicants receive anonymous copies of the field and/or panel reviews. IMLS also sends notification of the awards to each participating reviewer.

Appendix B: Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

As a Reviewer for IMLS, you perform a vital role in ensuring the integrity of the IMLS's peer review process and must carry out your duties in accordance with government ethics rules. Before you evaluate applications, we ask that you review the following *General Principles of Ethical Conduct* and *Summary of the Conflict of Interest Laws*. You will be asked to certify compliance with the IMLS Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement and Certification. IMLS allocates up to one hour of your reviewer time for you to consider these materials.

If, at any time in the course of performing your duties at IMLS, you believe you may have a conflict of interest, please contact the IMLS program officer coordinating your review process. Other questions about the ethics rules and responsibilities may be directed to IMLS's Designated Agency Ethics Official at ethics@imls.gov; (202) 653-4787; 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000, Washington, DC 20024-2135.

General Principles of Ethical Conduct

1. Public service is a public trust, requiring you to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
2. You shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
3. You shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. You shall not, except pursuant to such reasonable exceptions as are provided by regulation, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by IMLS, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of your duties.
5. You shall put forth honest effort in the performance of your duties.
6. You shall make no unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Government.
7. You shall not use public office for private gain.
8. You shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
9. You shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.
10. You shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.
11. You shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
12. You shall satisfy in good faith your obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those – such as Federal, State, or local taxes – that are imposed by law.
13. You shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.
14. You shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that you are violating the law or the ethical standards.

Summary of Conflict of Interest Laws

18 U.S.C. § 201 – Prohibits you from acceptance of bribes or gratuities to influence Government actions.

18 U.S.C. § 203 – Prohibits you from accepting compensation for representational activities involving certain matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

18 U.S.C. § 205 – Prohibits you from certain involvement in claims against the United States or representing another before the Government in matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

18 U.S.C. § 207 – Imposes certain restrictions on you related to your activities after Government service.

18 U.S.C. § 208 – Prohibits you from participating in certain Government matters affecting your own financial interests or the interests of your spouse, minor child, general partner, or organization in which you are serving as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee.

18 U.S.C. § 209 – Prohibits you from being paid by someone other than the United States for doing their official Government duties.

Sample Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a Reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), you may receive a grant application for review that could present a conflict of interest. Such a conflict could arise if you are involved with the applicant institution, or in the project described in the application, as a paid consultant or through other financial involvement. The same restrictions apply if your spouse or minor child is involved with the applicant institution or if the application is presented on behalf of an institution with which you, your spouse or minor child is negotiating for future employment.

A present financial interest is not the only basis for conflict of interest. Through prior association as an employee or officer, you may have gained knowledge of the applicant that would preclude objective review of its application. Past employment (generally more than five years prior to submission of the application) does not by itself disqualify a Reviewer so long as the circumstances of your association permit you to perform an objective review of the application. If you believe you may have a conflict of interest with any application assigned to you for review, please notify us immediately.

You may still serve as a Reviewer even if your institution is an applicant in this grant cycle or you were involved in an application submitted in this grant cycle, as long as you do not review any application submitted by your own institution or any application in which you were involved. However, if you believe that these or any other existing circumstances may compromise your objectivity as a Reviewer, please notify us immediately.

If an application presents no conflict of interest at the time you review it, a conflict of interest may still develop later on. Once you have reviewed an application, you should never represent the applicant in dealings with IMLS or another Federal agency concerning the application, or any grant that may result from it.

Pending applications are confidential. It is not appropriate, for your purposes or for the purposes of the institutions or organizations you represent, for you to make specific use of confidential information derived from individual applications that you read while you were serving as an IMLS Reviewer. Accordingly, you must obtain approval from IMLS before sharing any proposal information with anyone, whether for the purpose of obtaining expert advice on technical aspects of an application or for any other reason.

If you have any questions regarding conflict of interest, either in relation to a specific application or in general, please contact the IMLS program officer who is coordinating the review process.

Certification

I acknowledge that I have reviewed the ethics training materials and the Conflict of Interest Statement above. To the best of my knowledge, I have no conflict of interest that would preclude my service to the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Note: Once you have reviewed this document, return to eGMS Reach to affirm that you have approved its contents.

Appendix C: Example Peer Reviewer Comments

The following samples are the anonymized comments made available to both successful and unsuccessful applicants after funding decisions are announced.

Sample 1: Panel Peer Reviewer Evaluation
Program: Inspire! Grants for Small Museums
Category: Collections Stewardship and Access

IGSM-123456-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum

Panel Reviewer 1

Goals:

The museum proposes a project to digitize its entire collection and make it accessible to scholars and the public. The underutilized resource of correspondence that document the creation of an art collection and an educational program is relevant across diverse disciplines and areas of study. Although the museum already has preserved, conserved, and provided appropriate storage for the collection, this proposal seeks to address the next step via digitization and increased accessibility. The project aligns with the museum's strategic plan and will address the needs of multiple and diverse audiences.

Implementation:

The project builds on previous activities relating to preservation, conservation, and cataloging as well as the implementation of a digital assets managements system. The project work plan is ambitious and proposes to scan the entire collection by the end of the first year. The remaining project years will be dedicated to the creation of portals for accessibility. Risks have been assessed including potential issues of copyright. The project has identified the highest priority areas for website presentation. Responsibilities for each project are clearly stated and involve the contributions of staff of diverse departments. The use of grant funds for a dedicated project assistant will help ensure consistency in the project and the use of a scanning vendor will enable the scanning component of the project to be completed at a much faster rate.

Results:

The project will serve audiences including the scholarly community, museum staff, museum visitors, and the public. Increased digital accessibility will allow for increased use and will minimize risks to the collection. At the completion of the project, a full year of programming is planned. Although the programming is not articulated as it is outside the scope of the proposal, the inclusion of this information would have been useful. The project leaders propose to sustain the project results through the creation of online exhibitions annually. Previous projects resulted in significant publications and catalogues. The project leaders anticipate that increased accessibility will have similar scholarly results. The museum will communicate the project via traditional and social media channels to its audiences and to the professional archival and library community.

Overall Score

5

Museum/Organizational Unit Size

Yes

Museum/Organizational Unit Size (Optional Comment)

The museum is a good fit for the Inspire program.

Sample 2: Panel Peer Reviewer Evaluation
Program: Inspire! Grants for Small Museums
Category: Lifelong Learning

IGSM-123457-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum

Panel Reviewer 2

Goals:

The new exhibit will expand offerings at the children's museum for more interactivity and play and fits the goal of sharing area cultural groups with the community audience at large. The intention to work with groups of children as well as an expert on the local community group are good inclusions to the project to make sure the final product is engaging. It also makes sense for this area to learn more about their neighbors and to dispel some myths. However, I do wonder if the local community group members themselves, besides being hired for labor, have been included in the discussions of the creation of this exhibit. It is briefly mentioned in the Project Work Plan that the craftspeople will plan exhibit content as well as build out. It can be problematic if an outsider tells the story of a cultural group from an academic point of view. One can lose the humanity of the group if they are treated as an other that needs study from the outside looking in. This can be avoided if it is discussed with the community representatives themselves about what the museum is creating. I have concerns about how the community members would feel about their lives becoming an exhibit, and it is unclear if they have been engaged yet in this idea.

Implementation:

While it is a simple and straightforward plan, there are some additional things to think about with implementation. The exhibit design phase seems to come before the collaborative meetings. My experience has been with exhibit design firms that the meetings with interested parties and experts in the client's group often meet with the design firm before they create a concept plan and designs. I would suggest that while the firm be selected in the fall, the museum should expect to have collaborative meetings before the firm works on designs. The museum might also want the children involved in the design plan phase to offer what they'd like to see or do in such an exhibit to help enrich the design of offerings.

Additionally, good exhibit design can also benefit from fast prototyping before the build out is finalized. It might help create a more interactive exhibit if elements of the exhibit activities are introduced in the main floor of the museum early in the process. It can be an introduction to the idea of the exhibit coming in the future and an opportunity for staff to observe interactivity and interest in different play elements for the exhibit. This helps to make sure the interactivity you intend will occur before making permanent exhibit structures. I am also concerned that the only risk identified is the delay of an additional grant. There are also often building renovation delays that can then delay the exhibit project from starting on time. There may also be additional COVID surges we haven't yet anticipated. Think about other possible scenarios that might cause delays or put the project at risk and think about how you might mitigate them.

Results:

The goal for the results of the use of the exhibit are straightforward: the exhibit will teach families about the lifestyles and beliefs of the local community group that is part of the larger metropolitan community. The hope is that the exhibit will help dispel myths and prejudices. While it is clear that surveys will be distributed to measure the impact of visitors' understanding of the community group it is not as clear if the museum has a baseline survey of current attitudes and thoughts. During exhibit design, I suggest that the museum also have formative surveys to find out what those that currently visit the museum know and think about the local community group. Then there will be a baseline to compare previous attitudes to what they hope will be changed attitudes once they survey the groups after they go through the exhibit spaces.

Overall Score

3

Museum/Organizational Unit Size

Yes

Museum/Organizational Unit Size (Optional Comment)

The museum has a large staff. However, most are part-time, which is why I agree that this museum qualifies as a small museum.

Sample 3: Panel Peer Reviewer Evaluation
Program: Inspire! Grants for Small Museums
Category: Institutional Capacity

IGSM-123458-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum

Panel Reviewer 3

Goals:

The proposed project does fit in Goal 2 and Objective 2.3 (Support Technology Enhancements), though it does seem that the project may be more closely aligned with Lifelong Learning (Goal 1), and Objective 2. The project will strengthen the museum's ability and capacity to reach its public, specifically the diverse audiences in their local area. The proposed project is well aligned with the museum's strategic plan and moves its work forward in several strategic areas. The project should strengthen the museum's ability to be a more inclusive community resource.

Overall the goals for this project for the museum are well identified and articulated, as is its internal need to develop this digital education opportunity. What hasn't been well established is the community's need for such a digital education opportunity that is grounded in the community's input. Seeking input from the community that the museum most hopes to reach and engage through the creation of this app would help in better framing the need for the project.

Implementation:

The planned activities seem reasonable, well thought out, and make sense. The goals, assumptions, and risks are clearly stated, and potential mitigations to the risks are identified. The overall budget make sense and supports the scope of the project.

It is not clear how the planned app will help the museum better serve low income residents, which is one of the project's goals. It is also unclear if creating the app in multiple languages really creates more accessibility for area residents, as it is unclear if area residents who would want such an opportunity currently visit the museum. It's not clear whether the museum has a plan to target marketing to reach this audience, or a plan for developing community partners to help them share the availability of this app to those they most want to reach with the app. It is unclear if the staff identified have all the skills needed to complete this project. While they clearly have the skills to manage the project, it would help to have included the Curator as Key Staff as the expert on the science and the objects in the collection to be the content focus. It would also have been helpful to include resumes for the other 2 key staff identified.

Results:

The intended outcomes of the project are supported by the work plan. If successful, the work done in this project has the potential to be impactful for the organization in its desire to be more accessible for more members of its diverse community. Including more details on the planed evaluation would strengthen the proposal. The narrative mentions that they will collect useful data via the app, but this data won't help them get to the heart of what really works well, what doesn't work well, what's missing that should/could be added to create better more meaningful engagement, what value the app is to those who use it, and it's overall effectiveness as a learning tool.

More information on who will develop the actual content for the app is needed. The proposal says the project's mission is to provide inspiring, research-based resources to support engaging and relevant learning experiences for youth, adults, and communities, as well as promote citizen science but without information on the content that will be focused on, or on how that content will be centered and presented, there is not a way to assess if the app proposed will meet the project's mission.

Overall Score 2

Museum/Organizational Unit Size No

Museum/Organizational Unit Size (Optional Comment)

While the museum may well be a small sized organization in comparison to other similar organizations located near by, the case is not made as to why they should be considered small, nor did they share attributes that describe structural or organizational issues that restrict the abilities and capacity of their organization in the organizational profile.