



Museums Empowered

Sample Application ME-245571-OMS-20
Project Category: Diversity and Inclusion

Ford's Theatre

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$128,364
Amount of cost share:	\$129,003

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:
<https://www.ims.gov/grants/awarded/me-245571-oms-20>

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing applications for the FY2021 Museums Empowered grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2020 applications. Be sure to use the instructions in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

What do you propose to do? Ford's Theatre Society (FTS) respectfully requests a two-year Museums Empowered grant to build institutional capacity to establish and sustain an inclusive workplace culture and empower front-line staff to confidently engage with visitors – in person or online – about the highly charged themes of political violence associated with our site. As the site of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination and death, visited by nearly 650,000 people each year, as well as a working theatre producing American works that often address resonant issues in the American experience, we believe doing this work deliberately and transparently will allow us to serve as a model for others in the public history field. To accomplish this, FTS will:

- Hold facilitated workshops and discussion groups for all 80 part-time and full-time staff, based on topics identified through a 2019-2020 assessment process;
- Generate a specific statement of values and practices that drive FTS institutional culture, overseen by a standing, cross-departmental equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) committee;
- Develop a set of tools and protocols for proactive engagement of community and national partners in programming development;
- Develop a set of tools and protocols for ongoing staff support and onboarding incoming staff on EDI practices central to FTS culture;
- Create a series of training modules in dialogic interpretation, guided by the FTS interpretive plan, that can be offered to incoming administrative and front-line staff; and
- Author a series of process-oriented blog posts that will reflect upon FTS cultural change, creating a means for sharing that with the field.

This project will build upon work being done in 2019 and 2020 to assess needs and begin holistic anti-bias training for all staff. FTS will draw upon already existing relationships with the Empathetic Museum (EM) and the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) to provide training and guidance as staff builds sustainable systems, policies and cultures towards becoming an inclusive place for all to experience, learn and enjoy; and a model for other organizations attempting to do the same.

What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified? Ford's Theatre is uniquely positioned at the real-world center of U.S. politics, equidistant from the White House and Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The site attracts visitors seeking out U.S. history, and the stories we tell often resonate with our visitors (and staff) in profound ways. We have found it increasingly necessary to equip our staff with the skills and confidence to have meaningful and sometimes difficult conversations about the historical significance of our site. For example, when FTS produced the musical *Ragtime* in 2017, many performers found reenacting the depictions of racially motivated police violence traumatic, given the contemporary landscape of police violence and performing on a stage that literally represents political violence. The staff did not have the understanding and skills to address these very real tensions. Further discussions have led FTS to prioritize building greater institutional capacity to address a perceived gap in cultural competency.

This project will address two major, interrelated needs for the institution and its audiences: 1) building cultural competency throughout the organization and 2) responsibly engaging visitors in discussions about often-charged topics, including racially motivated, anti-democratic political violence, a key reason why our historic site remains relevant today. Current and upcoming institutional initiatives have made addressing these needs urgent.

In November 2018, in partnership with the National Park Service (NPS), consultant Kate Haley Goldman, and ICSC, FTS completed a comprehensive interpretive plan, laying out five interpretive themes related to the Lincoln assassination: Lincoln's complex leadership; his love of theatre; Civil War and Reconstruction-era Washington; and memorialization (See Supporting Document 1). As of November 2019, FTS and NPS are in

early stages of planning an overhaul of the site-wide visitor experience, guided by the interpretive plan. The new visitor experience, including exhibitions, is scheduled to open in late 2022. Additionally, FTS has recently purchased a building adjacent to its current Center for Education and Leadership, which will be renovated to create three new programming spaces, addressing the present-day implications of Lincoln's presidency and assassination, among other topics.

The new interpretive plan lays out three "foundational truths" that, in part, address the racist and anti-democratic motivations of John Wilkes Booth and his co-conspirators and offer support and backing to staff when addressing contested historical themes. Since the interpretive plan's completion, staff members have repeatedly expressed support for the plan but trepidation about engaging visitors in these topics without further training. To be effective and ethical stewards of our stories, we must do the internal work of developing staff members' understanding of and comfort with discussing systemic racism and other societal issues that are part of the stories we tell, and our lives today. To plan responsibly for the new visitor experience and public programs, FTS sees an urgent need to build cultural competency and train staff in dialogic interpretation. We recognize that we do not currently have the experience or expertise on staff to do this work without substantial outside support, but we plan to develop both through this project. This work will ensure our staff has the skills and capacity to communicate challenging stories to a wide and diverse audience. It will also create an inclusive environment for all who visit or work with us, so that equity, diversity and inclusion are integral to our institutional culture and can be sustained by cross-departmental staff committees.

Who or what will benefit from your project? Primarily, the whole FTS staff and secondarily, the visitors to Ford's Theatre will benefit from this project. Staff will benefit by building cultural competency and training in dialogic interpretation, both of which are urgently needed for interpreting contested histories effectively and responsibly. EDI trainings will benefit all staff, both full-time and part-time, as well as volunteers, board members, and contracted artists. Dialogic interpretative training will include all staff who regularly interact with visitors, both on- and off-site, including visitor services associates, educators, exhibition staff, development staff (who regularly lead tours for donors) and communications staff. It will follow a "train the trainers" model, building competency among FTS staff to lead future trainings in dialogic interpretation. Visitors and community members will benefit indirectly because FTS will be better equipped to interpret the site of Lincoln's assassination and death and to produce complex theatre that addresses Lincoln's legacy in the 21st century. As FTS becomes increasingly able to responsibly engage a more diverse audience in contested histories and their present-day implications, we will be able to provide a more robust and engaging visitor experience for all, including students, tourists, theatre-goers and our aspirational audience, locals.

How will your project advance your institution's strategic plan? In January 2014, the FTS board approved a five-year strategic plan. Among the stated goals are to: 1) offer an on-site experience that stimulates the hearts and minds of all visitors; and 2) strengthen organizational capabilities to support the expansion of impact. This project aligns with both objectives by increasing organizational capacity to provide a compelling experience that is inclusive and meaningful to all visitors of the historic site and museum exhibits, as well as strengthening our organizational culture to better support a diverse workforce. We are in the early stages of developing a new plan as we move into this new period of expansion.

How will your project address the goals of the Museums Empowered initiative to strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public through professional development activities that cross-cut various departments to generate systemic change within the museum? This project will empower staff to think critically about race, history and identity, among other topics, within the context of our historic site and theatre, and in the contexts of our individual lives. It will span departments, building on previous cross-departmental work in creating a digital strategy, prototyping new interpretive interventions and developing a comprehensive

interpretive plan. The project will generate systemic change by developing tools and protocols for training. This project will incorporate the learning of staff members into the policies and practices of the institution and allow FTS to better serve our audiences and visitors.

How will your project align with one of the four project categories: Digital Technology, Diversity and Inclusion, Evaluation, or Organizational Management? This project is aligned with the Diversity and Inclusion project category. Grant-related activities will build capacity among staff, board, volunteers and artists to become a self-sustaining, equitable and inclusive cultural institution, with the skills and understandings that will allow us to engage authentically in programs and exhibitions about difficult topics with a wide range of visitors.

PROJECT WORK PLAN

What specific activities, including evaluation and performance measurements, will you carry out? FTS will contract with the Empathetic Museum (EM), a coalition of international consultants founded in 2012, to examine, design, and share functionally empathetic museum practice. Janeen Bryant and Stacey Mann have co-designed four phases of staff development using their organizational framework, the EM Maturity Model (see Supporting Document 2). The design is deliberately collaborative, inviting the voices and perspectives of staff in co-creating a plan for ongoing workshops addressing a range of EDI topics. Some of these topics will be determined through the assessment process but will certainly include the following: decolonizing theatre and museum practices; developing anti-racist programming; partnering with the local community to prototype new programs; internal and external communications using inclusive and equitable language; and examining and changing non-inclusive and/or inequitable internal policies and practices.

Supporting the needs of all FTS staff requires a rigorous process with multiple components. The current staff includes 24% people of color, including those who identify as Asian-American, African-American, Latinx and multi-ethnic. The presence of cross-racial, multi-generational identities in the FTS staff challenge typical EDI processes beyond implicit bias training and socially conscious vocabulary. As FTS seeks to become fluent in empathy with all identities, they will solidify consistent policies and practice through this more than two-year evaluation and engagement process. Staff voice is embedded and empowered from the kickoff through project check-ins, visioning interviews, staff development workshops and ongoing interrogation and assessment of program recommendations and institutional needs. This collective work will conclude with a report, informing development, delivery and presentation of ongoing efforts continuing past the grant period.

FTS will also contract with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) to carry out a two-year intensive staff training in ICSC's methodology, dialogic structure (ICSC's Arc of Dialogue), foundational tools of dialogue and strategies for responding to challenging moments (see Supporting Document 3). FTS and ICSC will collaborate to develop FTS's internal capacity for self-review, development and training in all the above skills. The initial rounds of training will be led by ICSC staff to establish a baseline of knowledge across the institution. ICSC will then work with select staff to train them in coaching ongoing work and in training new staff in the foundations of the work. This loop will be repeated twice, furthering FTS capacity to lead increasingly complex aspects of dialogic interpretation.

What is your project's maturity level (i.e. exploratory, piloting, scaling, or mainstreaming)? For the last few years, FTS has been in the exploratory phase of developing EDI initiatives and dialogic interpretive training. As a result of a 2017 Museums Empowered grant, FTS developed a road map for becoming a fully accessible institution, and this project will create a model for doing similar work around EDI issues. FTS has publicly stated its commitment to diversity and inclusion and has worked over the last few years to increase both the diversity of staff and contractors and the awareness of inclusive practices amongst the staff. Approximately half

the full-time staff has participated in one-off anti-bias training and/or dialogic interpretive workshops. By October 2020, all full-time and part-time staff will have participated in an institutional assessment, including a diagnostic survey and visioning interviews, led by consultants affiliated with EM in order to create a proposed action plan. The staff will also (in 2020) take part in a series of workshops designed to explore explicit and implicit bias on a personal level. In 2020, staff will create a cross-departmental EDI committee to focus on institutional policies and culture.

What are the risks to the project, and have you identified ways to monitor or mitigate risk in the work plan?

The risks for this project are largely personnel driven. Addressing EDI issues is sensitive work, and there will no doubt be moments when staff members feel uncomfortable during this process, which could lead to a variety of negative outcomes if not managed skillfully. For this reason, FTS will call on experienced, highly trained facilitators to provide initial training and building staff skills as facilitators and listeners. Additionally, because this project is designed to build capacity in the current staff, staff turnover could pose a risk to the sustainability of this internal capacity. This risk is mitigated by building into our work plan development of protocols and policies for ongoing training, which will live beyond the tenures of current staff.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

Key Staff:

- **Allison Alonzy**, Director of Visitor Operations, has more than 15 years of experience working with site visitors and front-line staff. She will oversee the training of front-line staff, working closely with the Associate Director for Interpretive Resources to develop tools and protocols so that the project work is embedded in FTS institutional practice.
- **Kristin Fox-Siegmund**, Deputy Director and Director of Programs, has more than 25 years of experience working in cultural institutions. Kristin will provide strategic leadership and will help connect the public history and theatrical branches of Ford's Theatre to make sure this project reaches not just administrative and front-line staff but the artists and crew who make our productions happen.
- **Sarah Jencks** (Project Co-Director), Director of Education and Interpretation, has almost 25 years of experience working in the cultural and educational sectors. She will provide oversight for the work with ICSC, developing exhibitions and interpretive opportunities that incorporate dialogic interpretation.
- **David McKenzie**, Associate Director for Interpretive Resources, has more than 15 years of experience in public history settings and is writing his doctoral dissertation in history. He will work closely with the Director of Visitor Operations to develop tools and resources for training front-line staff and to incorporate dialogic interpretation into new museum exhibitions.
- **Doug Wilson** (Project Co-Director), Director of Finance and Administration, has more than 25 years of experience in not-for-profit administration. He will oversee the human resources aspects of this project, making sure that the training and development align with institutional policies and practices.

Consultants:

- **Janeen Bryant** is the owner of Facilitate Movement and a founding member of the **Empathetic Museum**. A catalyst for building innovative solutions with community-centered focus for both education and museums since 2000, she is an inter-sectional educator, facilitator and nonprofit leader.
- **Stacey Mann** helps organizations identify and integrate missing and marginalized narratives across learning experiences and consults widely on EDI issues through her work with the **Empathetic Museum**, Museums & Race and Unsilence.
- **Braden Paynter**, who serves as Program Manager, Membership, Methodology, Practice for the **International Coalition of Sites of Conscience**, will be the primary contact and trainer for ICSC work, along with his colleagues Sarah Pharaon and Dina Bailey. Paynter leads trainings in the organization's methodology, particularly in dialogic interpretation, for ICSC members around the world.

How does the makeup of the project team and/or partners and collaborators provide an opportunity for the project to benefit from diverse perspectives, shared networks, and best practices? ICSC is a global network of over 275 member-sites in 65 countries. As a member organization, FTS taps into the accumulated expertise of ICSC's staff, as well as other member organizations around the world, through webinars, regional meetings and informal dialogue. Additionally, FTS is able to access ICSC's extensive resource library. Janeen Bryant and Stacey Mann work as EDI consultants across the country. Their experience with institutions including the Levine Museum of the New South, the National Museum of the American Indian and the Delaware Art Museum; as well as social justice collaboratives including Museums and Race, MASS Action and EM allow them to bring a broad understanding of institutional practice to inform their work with FTS. FTS has sent staff to MASS Action meetings and EM workshops, participated in Museums & Race conversations and played leadership roles in the American Alliance of Museums and the American Association for State and Local History professional communities. These experiences provide access to a range of perspectives and a wide array of expertise that can be called on for additional learning opportunities. It is through work with these communities that we have developed an appreciation for and relationships with these consultants, which ultimately will benefit this project.

How will collaborations you have proposed be structured in a way that is equitable and mutually beneficial in order to strengthen your project? This project is designed to build internal staff capacity that will lead to more equitable, longstanding and mutually beneficial relationships with community partners. The work of the project is based on creating time and space for institutional and individual learning and reflection, with the assistance from hired expert outside facilitators and trainers. While Ford's often builds partnerships, this work is driven by formalized contracts.

When and in what sequence will your activities occur?

Before grant begins (funded by FTS): Winter 2019-Summer 2020: Begin planning for new permanent exhibition, to be at Schematic Design (35%) phase by Sept. 2020; EM administers Diagnostic Survey, conducts Interviews & Visioning, issues Findings Report and Recommendations; EM Empathetic Practice workshops 1, 2, 3 and 4 with FTS staff

Fall 2020

- EM Collaborative Planning and Priorities meeting
- EM Personal Sphere workshops with FTS staff
- ICSC three-day training in dialogic interpretation with FTS staff
- ICSC one-day meeting with core project team to plan and manage further staff training
- Quarterly check-in between core project team and ICSC, to discuss ongoing challenges and successes
- Ongoing exhibition planning, to be at Design Development (65%) phase (separately funded)

Winter 2020-2021

- EM Cultural Sphere workshops with FTS staff
- Quarterly check-in between core project team and ICSC, to discuss ongoing challenges and successes
- Ongoing exhibition planning, to be at Final Design (100%) phase (separately funded)

Spring 2021

- EM Institutional Sphere workshops with FTS staff
- EM Phase 2 evaluation report and presentation
- ICSC two-day reinforcement training session with FTS staff. ICSC staff will lead most training, but will be training FTS staff to be able to train in the future
- Quarterly check-in between core project team and ICSC, to discuss ongoing challenges and successes

Summer 2021

- ICSC training (one day) with core team on training and coaching dialogic interpreters
- EM Collaborative Planning and Priorities meeting for Phase 3

- EM Training Protocols for Seasonal and New Staff
- Quarterly check-in between core project team and ICSC, to discuss ongoing challenges and successes

Fall 2021

- EM Breakout Sessions 1 and 2 with FTS staff
- Quarterly check-in between core project team and ICSC, to discuss ongoing challenges and successes

Winter 2021-2022

- EM Breakout Sessions 3 and 4 with FTS staff
- Quarterly check-in between core project team and ICSC, to discuss ongoing challenges and successes

Spring 2022

- EM Breakout Sessions 5 through 8 with FTS staff
- EM Phase 3 evaluation report and presentation
- Quarterly check-in between core project team and ICSC, to discuss ongoing challenges and successes

Summer 2022

- EM Future Planning strategic session to summarize engagement findings and develop strategies for sustainable transformation
- FTS staff-led dialogue training, with ICSC support
- Quarterly check-in between core project team and ICSC, to discuss ongoing challenges and successes
- EM final report and wrap-up

What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities? The most important resources necessary for success are commitment of all staff and time to engage in training, reflection, discussion and planning. The FTS senior staff has made it clear this project is a priority and that staff time will be allocated to complete the work. In addition, financial resources are necessary to compensate consultants who will train our team to embed equity, inclusion and dialogic interpretation in everything we do.

How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results? Progress will be tracked by charting staff skills on a bi-annual basis. EM consultants will administer surveys asking for feedback and comfort with a range of skills and capacities, using both a diagnostic tool, the Intercultural Development Inventory and the EM Maturity Model to benchmark progress. FTS staff leaders will track the growth of staff skills in implementing dialogic interpretation on an annual basis through formal and informal observation and staff interviews.

How and with who will you share your projects results? We will share our project's results in four key ways: 1. Blog posts on the institution's blog, freely accessible to fellow practitioners and the public; 2. FTS social media channels, including Twitter and Facebook; 3. Transparency with visitors about dialogic interpretation and the values of the site; and 4. We plan to have discussions with colleagues and would like to present at professional conferences like American Alliance of Museums, American Association for State and Local History and National Council for Public History.

PROJECT RESULTS

What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified? Through trainings and workshops with EM and ICSC, FTS staff will gain both increased cultural competency and training in dialogic interpretation. These increased competencies will address current shortcomings in the institution and better equip staff to execute the 2018 interpretive plan through programming and exhibitions. Additionally, this project will build internal capacity to train new staff in the future.

How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the intended audience change as a result of your project? We expect to see elevated confidence and frequency of use across the staff in using inclusive

language, implementing inclusive and equitable policies and practices, and engaging in facilitated dialogue with visitors (including development and communications staff who give tours and handle social media). The EM Maturity Model includes five growth areas: Civic Vision; Institutional Body Language; Community Resonance; Timeliness and Sustainability; and Performance Measures. FTS staff members and institutional culture should demonstrate growth in each of these areas as a result of the project activities. The 2018 interpretive plan includes a set of know-feel-do outcomes for each of the five interpretive themes, such as “Connect the assassination as an act of political violence to other similar events and critically analyze their justifications and efficacy” and “Advocate for and encourage others to peacefully participate in the democratic process.” Training in dialogic interpretation will help FTS staff lead visitors toward the outcomes established.

What barriers might there be for others who may wish to learn from and/or adapt your results in developing their own projects? FTS is a unique institution—a theatrical production company as well as a National Park Service partner - so its internal organizational chart is different from those of most museums. For example, visitor services staff are part of the Communications Department, and are in the same sub-department as ticketing and theatre house management staff. Some of the structures that FTS will have to put into place for cross-departmental work will likely not apply in other organizations. Additionally, FTS has a large, mostly out-of-town audience that does not necessarily reflect that of many museums or historic sites. One institutional goal for this project is to become more connected to local visitors.

How will the institution's internal capacity be strengthened as a result of your project? As a result of this project, FTS staff will have stronger capacity to engage with visitors in meaningful dialogues about racially motivated, anti-democratic political violence. FTS staff will also have a clearer vision as well as solid policies and protocols in place to sustain an inclusive and equitable institutional culture. These changes should make FTS a more appealing place to work and Ford's Theatre a more inclusive place to visit for a more diverse representation of our national population. Because the dialogic interpretation training portion of the project will follow a “train the trainers” model, by the end of the grant period FTS staff members will be able to lead dialogic interpretation training for new staff and developmental sessions for returning staff.

What data will you collect and report to measure your project's success? As part of their scope of work, EM consultants Bryant and Mann will regularly collect self-reported data from staff members participating in workshops and small groups. Additionally, Bryant and Mann will look at staff reflective writing as a means to gather qualitative and anecdotal data on culture and policy changes. With regard to dialogic interpretation, Jencks, the project co-director, will administer pre- and post-training surveys asking staff to report their comfort level with a range of specific skills associated with the trainings.

What tangible products will result from your project?

As a result of this project, FTS will have developed the following:

1. A vision statement for equity, diversity and inclusion at Ford's Theatre;
2. A cadre of tools and protocols that staff - and others - can use to gather input from outside partners and community members in developing programs and resources; and
3. A plan and tools that allow for clear implementation of ongoing staff support and new staff orientation, as well as for welcoming production teams and actors to a rehearsal process.

How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project? Sustaining the learning and growth we will undertake in this project is built into the work. By developing protocols and policies that will live beyond current staff tenure, and by training staff to lead orientations and trainings for future staff, FTS will embed equitable and inclusive practices, as well as dialogic interpretive strategies into our institutional culture.

**Ford's Theatre Society
Schedule of Completion**

**Museums Empowered
FY 2020**

Project Activities	2020			2021								
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
EM Collaborative Planning and Priorities meeting	█											
EM Personal Sphere Workshops with FTS staff		█										
ICSC 3-day training in dialogic interpretation with FTS staff	█											
ICSC one-day meeting with core project team to plan and manage further staff training		█										
Quarterly check-ins between core project team and ICSC			█			█			█			█
EM Cultural Sphere workshops with FTS staff			█									
EM Institutional Sphere Workshops with FTS Staff					█							
EM Phase 2 evaluation report and presentation						█						
ICSC led two-day reinforcement training session with FTS staff.								█				
ICSC training (one day) with core team on training and coaching dialogic interpreters									█			
EM Collaborative Planning and Priorities Meeting for Phase 3											█	
2021 American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) annual meeting												█

**Ford's Theatre Society – FTS *Empathetic Museum – EM *International Coalition of Sites of Conscience - ICSC*

**Ford's Theatre Society
Schedule of Completion**

**Museums Empowered
FY 2020**

Project Activities	2021			2022								
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
EM Breakout Sessions 1 and 2 with FTS staff	█											
Quarterly check-ins between core project team and ICSC.			█			█			█			█
EM Breakout Sessions 3 and 4 with FTS staff			█									
2022 National Council on Public History (NCPH) annual meeting						█						
EM Breakout Sessions 5 through 8 with FTS staff						█	█					
EM Future Planning strategic session to summarize engagement findings and develop strategies for sustainable transformation								█				
2022 American Alliance of Museums (AAM) annual meeting								█				
FTS staff-led dialogic training, with ICSC support												█
EM final report and wrap-up										█	█	

**Ford's Theatre Society – FTS *Empathetic Museum – EM *International Coalition of Sites of Conscience - ICSC*