



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-249469-OMS-21
Project Category: Lifelong Learning

Captain Forbes House Museum

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| Amount awarded by IMLS: | \$50,000 |
| Amount of cost share: | \$21,470 |

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:
<https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/igsm-249469-oms-21>

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

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

Project Justification

Challenge and Planning

Eleven members of the Forbes family were involved in the 19th c. opium trade. Usage and deaths from synthetic opioids are on the rise.¹ Are there connections between the two? Did our relations with China then impact our relations with China now?

In Spring 2022, the Museum will open a ground-breaking exhibit, “The Business of Addiction: The Forbes Family and the Opium Trade.” This exhibit and accompanying programs are a direct response to community requests for transparency regarding the Forbes family’s “unseemly enterprise” and how it relates to an epidemic that is impacting every city and town in Massachusetts. This application is a request for funding to support programs related to the exhibit, which will address diverse adult audiences and school children in grades, 5, 8, and high school.

Inputs and Benefits

Input for this project was derived from focus groups, visitor comments, surveys sent to three organizational mailing lists, and from interviews with community leaders, elected officials, educators, museum professionals and scholars. Mass Humanities supported early planning efforts for the exhibition and the survey. To elicit more input, we are planning two more focus groups. One group will be a Scholars Round Table, made up of Chinese scholars in history, economics and culture. The other group will be a Community Advisory group made up of local Chinese residents and recent immigrants. These groups will be convened in early 2021. Participants will discuss what they know about the 19th c. China Trade and the beginning of the “century of humiliation” and how it affects them today. They will be asked about their knowledge of the drug trade now and their understanding of addiction. Their comments will be incorporated into the exhibit and will impact program planning, based on suggestions they may have. Angela Lee, HS teacher and President of the World History Association, provided input about what might interest school students. Other teachers provided input about the new civics curriculum in Massachusetts related to this project.

Several audiences will benefit from this programming. High school teachers will participate in a professional development workshop lead by Deborah Cunningham, Ph.D. of *Primary Source*, on “The Opium Trade in Context: Local, Global and Modern Connections.” *Primary Source* is a provider and deliverer of professional teacher content. Adult audiences, made up of local residents, community leaders and elected officials, those in recovery and their families, and various Chinese groups will benefit from programs that offer literacies in medicine and addiction science, American and world history, civics, business and economic history and expanded cultural awareness of other countries including China, India, Turkey, Afghanistan and Mexico, all suppliers of opium.

Relation to Strategic Plan

This project addresses a new mission statement and three areas of the strategic plan.



Inspired by the Forbes family legacy of entrepreneurship, social action and philanthropy, the Forbes House Museum fosters discourse around civic engagement and cultural awareness.

¹ According to the CDC, deaths from drug overdoses rose 9.1% in the last year. Seventy percent of those deaths were due to opioid use. *National Center for Drug Statistics*, [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

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The strategic goals that relate to this project are: 1) To provide a richer and deeper visitor experience, supported by scholarship for audiences. 2) To attract a more diverse and inclusive audience, and 3) To develop strategic partnerships to advance institutional goals. This project will support programs that provide new information about addiction, brain chemistry and treatment options, the current drug trade in opioids, and the state of US-China relations. It will provide new information about individual members of the Forbes family in context with other Brahmin families and with families like the Sacklers today. A new partnership with *Primary Source* will allow the Museum to offer other teacher workshops on future exhibit and program topics while a new partnership with Milton Substance Abuse and Prevention Coalition will provide the Museum with access to a wide range of speakers, to new information and to a very diverse audience base. We anticipate that focus group participants encourage those who might not otherwise feel comfortable in a museum, especially one in a formal house. An ongoing partnership with the Milton Public Library will add enormously to the breadth and depth of information available on any of the topics included in the project and will allow for additional programming like documentaries and book discussion groups.

Promote Lifelong Learning

The Museum and its partners will promote the IMLS goal of Lifelong Learning. Specifically we will promote *cross-disciplinary literacy* in addiction medicine, economics, American and world history, civic engagement and cultural awareness for students and for a diverse group of adults. Questions posed by focus groups form the basis of *inquiry-based learning* for adult visitors. Some adult programs will continue to use this method through follow-up evaluations that incorporate new questions for discussion and book groups. Suggested program topics are wide-ranging; some are noted below:

- John Halpern, MD, a local psychiatrist and addiction treatment specialist, will speak on a book he coauthored with David Blistein, *Opium: How an Ancient Flower Shaped and Poisoned Our World* (Hachette, 2019). This is a good history of opium use for pleasure and pain, dating back to 3400BC in Egypt. This lecture might be supplemented with a PBS documentary, *The Opioid Crisis, A Historical Perspective*, presented by the June Dahl, MD, and shown at the Library with a discussion to follow.
- Philip Thai, Ph.D., and Otis Edwards, speaking on American and Chinese business practices of the drug trade in the 19th and 20th c. Thai teaches Chinese economic history at Northeastern University. Edwards is a doctoral candidate at the University of Hong Kong, and writing his dissertation on business practices of the Forbes family, developed in part to bypass Chinese regulations.
- Peter Grinspoon, MD, author of *Free Refills: A Doctor Confronts His Addiction*. He is a local psychiatrist who writes on the intersection of COVID and the opioid epidemic.
- Representatives of Mass General, The Boston Athenaeum, and Perkins School for the Blind discussing how they were founded on opium profits donated by the Forbes family. Martha Bebinger, a NPR health reporter is the proposed moderator for this panel discussion.
- Captain Forbes might appear to discuss his views on opium drawn from his *Reminiscences*. Forbes defended his early forays into the opium trade but developed reservations when it became apparent that opium was an addictive substance.
- Actors in recovery might present a theatrical performance that's received rave reviews. That show might be accompanied by artworks of those in recovery. (IMLS funding not requested for this program).

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- School students will undertake civics projects building on exhibit themes and local resources in grade 8 and HS.
- A workshop on the history of Chinese racism in America facilitated by individuals from the Asian-American Resource Center or the Chinese Progressive Association.

Project Work Plan

Activity 1: Adult Programs

Barbara Silberman, Project Director of the exhibit and the programs will coordinate program development. Silberman is an experienced museum professional who served as program officer for the Pew Trusts evaluating history programs, and directed and consulted for small historic sites. She is very experienced in balancing diverse voices and needs having worked with exclusively African-American groups and schoolchildren from very different backgrounds. The workplan for Activity 1 will be to: prioritize program choices and a schedule, choose the appropriate platforms, including Zoom as needed, arrange for speakers, make the logistical arrangements and the media arrangements, and market and host the programs. Adult programs will begin in October 2021, before the exhibit opens. The first program will be planned in advance of the proposed project date for this proposal. Programs supported by IMLS will begin in Winter 2022 and end in Spring 2023. Silberman will work in collaboration with program partners, the exhibit developer and the executive director to plan and implement the programs. She will be responsible for ensuring that programs are evaluated and that the results are shared and implemented. Evaluation results will include but not be limited to demographic data, rating of program quality and content, rating of this program in relation to other Museum programs and responses to marketing techniques and messages. Activity 1 data will be disseminated through professional journals and conferences in related fields, social media, and organizational websites as appropriate.

Activity 2: School Programs

Elisabeth Nevins, an experienced museum educator and evaluator, will develop and implement programs for children in grades 5 and 8 and high school, built on school curriculum standards that include the China Trade.² Currently all 5th graders in Milton visit the Museum where they learn about local history and usually participate in an arts and crafts activity like Chinese calligraphy or a scavenger hunt for *foo dogs*. Nevins will build on existing relationships with 5th grade teachers to develop new modules that will shift the focus of these visits to the family business and involvement in the 19th century China trade. Students will engage in an inquiry-based object study using artifacts in the home associated with commonly known imports like porcelain and tea, and engage with objects like an opium pipe and *dotchin* (opium scale), a portrait of Houqua, the chief *hong* merchant and great friend of the Forbes brothers, paintings of Macao, where foreign trader families lived and Lintin, where opium was unloaded. Students will visit the barn, which will resemble the *hongs* in Canton (now Guangzhou). There they will explore the geography of the trade routes, using maps on display and examine the tea crates marked “China” and “Forbes.” In combination with family correspondence, these will serve as a starting point for small group activities. There will be concluding dialogue about the ethics of trading an addictive substance and the ways in which Boston and Milton benefitted. Due

² Grade 5 Content Standards, Topic 4, no. 4: On a map of New England, locate cities and towns that played important roles in the development of the textile and machinery industries, whaling, shipping, and the China trade in the 18th and 19th centuries

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to the sensitive nature of conversations about drug addiction for this age group, teachers will be given cross-disciplinary post-visit lesson materials connecting the 19th century Forbes story to the current opioid epidemic in the United States that they can use if appropriate. Students will be encouraged to visit the public library where they can learn about this topic on their own.

For 8th grade students, Nevins will identify 3-5 teachers with whom she might partner, and consider how students might use the exhibit as a starting point for the newly required civics projects that are part of the 8th grade social studies/civics curriculum. She will aid students in deciding on projects and will provide support for them throughout the project period.

For high schoolers, Nevins will add to the content provided by *Primary Source* at the high school teacher workshop to be held in October 2021. She will recruit a group of teachers from the workshop who will support the development of teaching resources that will be used during the run of the exhibit and beyond. These resources will fall into two categories: 1) general classroom teaching resources; the high school MA social studies curriculum standards address both civics and Sino- American relations as they relate to the 19th century Opium Wars and 2) resources to support high school students in completing the student-led, non-partisan civics project required by Massachusetts. Additions to the curriculum will cover topics like business ethics and international relations, the economy of addiction, and “dirty money” in philanthropy. Nevins will work with teachers, Museum staff and the Substance Abuse and Prevention Coalition staff to identify possible resources for civics projects. She will work with teachers and students at partner schools throughout their project process, to evaluate how the Museum can best support students in designing goal-driven, real-world, inquiry-based civics projects that achieve systems level impact in their communities. This process of co-creation and shared learning will result in a curated, tested set of resources that the Museum can share with Massachusetts teachers on websites like [teacherspayteachers.com](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com), a source for additional curriculum resources developed by other teachers so that these materials will live beyond the exhibit run. The Museum will hire a graduate student in museum education to assist Nevins. Nevins will train the assistant and any volunteers who might help with the school programs or with touring the exhibit.

All programs will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Director. These activities will require additional staff time, the expertise of a museum educator and museum evaluator, and assistance from a graduate student and volunteers to work with school groups.

Time is one risk that the Museum will face in undertaking this project. With enough experienced help, that risk can be mitigated. The biggest risk to developing and implementing these programs is balancing the needs of many groups with different agendas and ensuring that their voices are heard. It is always difficult to ensure and convey that people are understood and there is empathy for their positions. It will be difficult to do this but Silberman has years of experience in leading very diverse groups, listening to their concerns and taking appropriate action when needed. COVID-19 is always a risk factor but we are learning to adapt to whatever restrictions are in place.

Project Results

Desired outcomes are both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative results include:

- Increased knowledge base and insight (*literacies*) into the disciplines presented in the programs or more specifically:
- An increased understanding of the complexity of human nature as exhibited by the Forbes family in their roles as opium profiteers and philanthropic supporters who founded MassGeneral and arranged for 800K tons of food to be delivered to the starving Irish.

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- An understanding of addiction set in the context of world history, and a lessening of the stigma attached to an illness that has inherited risk factors.
- A new understanding of the factors impacting US-Sino relations today that might lessen the incidences of Chinese racism.
- A new appreciation for civic responsibility and civic action.

Quantitative outcomes include:

- Increase the number of new or culturally diverse visitors by 10%.
- Relationships established with two new strategic partners.

The project evaluator will develop surveys to measure qualitative outcomes. The surveys would include questions that allow participants to rank their changes in attitude. True/False questions might demonstrate an increase in knowledge or areas that need better explanation. Students might be asked to write brief descriptions of their feelings and insights about civic projects. Each evaluation tool will be analyzed and results will be used to improve interpretation and/or program platforms or other aspects of the program experience. In terms of quantitative outcomes, it will be possible to collect data to quantify the goals set forth.

Products

There are several products resulting from this project. New information generated by the speakers, educators, and scholars will inform future programs like basic house tours, school programs, and supporting material for the collections. Online resources developed by the museum educator and teachers will be available for all teachers and students. Adult programs in the form of speaker series, discussion groups or panel discussions will be available on local access TV and to schools. Most of these programs can be recorded on zoom and made available for streaming. Although school civics projects are not yet defined, undefined, they will make a difference in the quality of life for residents of areas where students live. Some of the evaluation findings can be shared with professional circles and associations.

Sustaining Benefits

The benefits of this project will be sustained long beyond the grant period. Since the majority of expenses for this project will cover the cost of the a museum educator and a museum evaluator-two positions that are hard to sustain on a full-time basis for a historic house museum-the products generated will be available in the future with little need for the human resources needed to develop them. New information gained through program presentations will infuse future programs and interpretations for the Museum. Many of the products generated by the project will live online or will be available for streaming. Some materials will be available through professional portals. Civics projects will have long-term benefits in the communities where the projects are carried out.

In summary, this project will address the concerns of visitors and others who are interested in learning more about the Forbes family and the opium trade and its connections to the opioid trade and epidemic. It will contribute to the *lifelong learning* of adults and schoolchildren, with *literacies* in medicine, history, economics, arts and culture. Through these programs, adults and children may change their attitudes and perspectives about addiction, the use of profits and philanthropy and about the Forbes family and the Museum itself. The project will provide several products with long-term benefits that will be in use for several years.

SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

Color Key

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|---------------------------|--------------|
| Executive Director | Grey |
| Project Director | Yellow |
| Museum Educator | Light Green |
| Evaluator | Light Blue |
| Asst to Director | Light Orange |

Activity 2-School Programs

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| HS-Provide support to teacher workshop | 2021 SEPT, OCT, NOV, DEC |
| Recruit 4-6 teachers to develop civic projects | 2021 SEPT, OCT, NOV, DEC |
| Develop program materials | 2022 JAN, FEB |
| Test program materials | 2022 JAN, FEB |
| Evaluate program materials | 2022 JAN, FEB |
| Identify 3-5 student groups interested in civics projects related to opium and opioid story | 2022 MARCH |
| Outreach to Primary Source workshop teachers re:civics projects | 2022 MAY, JUNE, JULY, AUG |
| Host Open House for civics projects for students and teachers featuring civics projects and resources | 2022 SEPT, OCT |
| Support for civics projects | 2023 JAN, FEB, MARCH |
| Evaluate civics programs | 2023 FEB, MARCH |

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| 5th Convene Milton PS 5th grade teachers | 2021 SEPT, OCT, NOV, DEC |
| Develop additions to current field trip | 2021 SEPT, OCT, NOV, DEC |
| Identify 2-3 teachers from MPS to review new program | 2022 JAN, FEB, MARCH |
| Hire PT Grad student to assist with programs | 2022 JAN, FEB, MARCH |
| Train grad student and volunteers | 2022 MARCH, APRIL |
| Student visits | 2022 MAY, JUNE |
| Revision materials | 2022 JULY, AUG |
| Evaluate programs | 2022 JULY, AUG |
| Support for student civics projects | 2022 MARCH, APRIL, MAY, JUNE |
| Evaluate civics projects | 2022 JULY, AUG |

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| Middle School | |
| Lock in 3-5 MS teacher partners for 2022-2023 school year work | 2022 MARCH, APRIL |
| Invite MS teachers for day-long workshop on exhibit and related materials, civics projects | 2022 MAY, JUNE, JULY |
| Brainstorm applications | 2022 OCT |
| Plan civics programs based on feedback | 2022 NOV, DEC, 2023 JAN |
| Evaluate civics programs | 2022 NOV, DEC, 2023 JAN |

