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Museums for America

Sample Application MA-249718-OMS-21
Project Category: Lifelong Learning

Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association

Amount awarded by IMLS: $193,572
Amount of cost share: $193,777

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:
https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/ma-249718-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 current
Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION Overview – The Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association (PVMA), also known as Memorial Hall Museum is requesting $193,572 to create a new version of its widely used *American Centuries: View from New England* website. One of the earliest museum websites, *American Centuries* was envisioned and built in 1999 in collaboration with area K-12 educators and guided by scholars to bring museum resources into the classroom. *American Centuries* has become a treasured, relied upon resource by local teachers and students as well as educators nationwide; secondary audiences of the general public also use the website. While it is a great achievement for the website to have lasted 20 years, it is now at risk of collapse due to archaic software. We must now rebuild the site while preserving features and content relied upon by its audiences and add new materials requested by educators.

Designed to engage K-12 students in learning about history using museum resources and to support national and Massachusetts curriculum standards, *American Centuries* highlights local, place-based histories and diverse, lesser known perspectives. Originally entitled *Turns of the Centuries* to capitalize on the interest in the new millennium, the website covers a wide span of American History (mid 1600s – mid 1900s) and encourages critical thinking and awareness of historical concepts that change over time. Its online collection presents an extensive, highly searchable database of over 2,000 items from PVMA's collections, with rich accompanying interpretation and interactive features. These collections are used in lessons, exhibits, and additional engaging interactive activities. Extensive audience-driven popular additions to the site include oral histories, an African American history portal, videos, 100s of teacher-created lessons, and links to PVMA's other acclaimed websites such as *Raid on Deerfield: The Many Stories of 1704* and *Shays' Rebellion.* These resources and the interactive activities they support are anchored in a sense of place. PVMA's three-county region provides a window into national themes encompassing the wide sweep of American History, engaging students locally and throughout the country.

American Centuries has developed large and loyal audiences. Teachers report that the *website is exceptional in several ways.* While many sites have searchable online collections, few present primary resources within the context of engaging, interactive features that inspire student directed learning and research. Teachers report that *American Centuries* is the *only place-based learning resource encompassing the sweep of American history for Western Mass. educators (and to some extent Mass. and New England).*

While there are still significant audiences of 130,000 unique website visitors annually, this represents a decline in usage from over 300,000 annually in earlier years, due in large part to outdated software and lack of responsive design. PVMA proposes to **regain and increase audiences by creating a new *American Centuries*, thus increasing impact**. The website will be created with modern technology and mobile-friendly design in collaboration with educators and scholars.

> *These sources [*American Centuries* website] are unique to our area and fill gaps left through teaching the larger picture of history without taking into account the impact of events locally or how local events impact the larger picture. This website fills the gap for students who do not do well with textbook learning.* (Stephanie Recore, Special Education Teacher, Deerfield)

Need – *American Centuries: View from New England* addresses three needs:

1) Need for place-based and high-quality primary resources with which to teach history and social studies using engaging inquiry-based learning approaches. Students are more interested in learning when materials are relevant to them[1]. History presented through a local lens and with an accompanying diversity of perspectives[2] helps students realize that *their history is American history.* National and state learning standards include New England history, colonial, and Revolutionary eras. *American Centuries* is a proven resource in meeting this need, evidenced by 1) large local and national educator audiences, 2) the integration of the website into the curricula at many area school districts, and 3) formal professional evaluation of projects that incorporate the site in K-12 teaching.

How this need was identified – Twenty years ago area teachers approached the museum requesting access to quality primary sources representing diverse people of the region using emerging internet technology to bring the museum into the classroom to engage students in learning. Today teachers still use *American Centuries* to meet this need. They continue to report the importance of such resources, most recently by a 9-teacher advisory group who helped plan this project, and during the museum's work with teachers to respond to COVID related needs. (*See attached letters*)

2) Needs for Technological and Design Infrastructure The current *American Centuries* is no longer maintainable and is at risk of collapse due to its archaic technological infrastructure. The website, coded from

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[1] David A. Greenwood, "Why Place Matters: Environment, Culture and Education," in Steven Tozer; Bernardo P Gallegos; Annette Henry, eds., *Handbook of Research in the Social Foundations of Education* (New York: Routledge, 2011)
[2] Holly Korbey, "A History in Which We Can All See Ourselves" in *Edutopia*, (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2018)

scratch before the advent of web frameworks, is highly idiosyncratic. The site's content is stored in an overly complex Access database. The image-serving technology is proprietary and no longer supported, presenting serious site-wide vulnerabilities. The user interface predates mobile devices and needs to be redesigned to meet modern expectations for a visual, flexible, and responsive user experience. Similarly, while created with accessibility in mind, the site needs to be brought up to current ADA compliance. The outdated code and software have been expensive to maintain and PVMA staff could not make needed corrections or additions to the site.

How this need was identified – PVMA has worked with technical consultants to update and sustain the website, most recently rebuilding features that used the now unsupported Adobe Flash software. We have tried to update other programming and problem areas but technical advisors now have determined that maintaining *American Centuries* is no longer possible and requires a complete rebuild. In the past year, the site has experienced an increasing number of 'crashes' for which we could only make short-term fixes. Teachers often contact us when the site goes down, and report that challenges such as firewalls and security alerts prevent easy access. Outdated software and lack of responsive design have impacted access and search result ranking, which explains the decline in unique visitors from at least 300,000 in earlier years, to typically about 130,000 unique visitors annually in the past 3 years.

3) Need for updated and additional historical content – Content needs to be updated with current scholarship. Educators express the need for additional content of lesser-known, often marginalized histories to meet the needs of their increasingly diverse student body, including more materials on African Americans and local Indigenous peoples. The *Black Lives Matter* movement has spurred teacher and student interest in African American history. It is important for students to understand our complex multicultural and multiracial history in order to deal knowledgeably and constructively with contemporary issues that are, in many ways, its legacies. Diverse perspectives on topics such as the American Revolution are of special interest with its upcoming 250th anniversary.

How this need was identified – Educators in our community have identified these needs through a nine-educator advisory group that helped plan this project, and other museum education initiatives. Teachers from NEH *Landmarks of American History* workshops have attested to the need for additional, relevant historical resources to engage diverse students; scholars identify the need to update scholarship and add content in similar areas. Content needs will be further identified by educators and scholars during the project.

Project Beneficiaries and Their Involvement in Planning– *K-12 educators and students in PVMA's three-county region* are *a primary audience* for the website. Franklin County, where the museum is located, is the most rural in the state, and the counties we serve have the lowest per-capita incomes in Massachusetts. *American Centuries* is widely used and depended upon in local curricula in our region. *Educators from throughout the country* also use the website *and will benefit from the project*. For example, a teacher from Joplin, Missouri (with no prior connection to PVMA), recently emailed the museum to thank us for updating features she regularly uses with her students (see attached). The NYC public schools incorporated the oral history of an African American WWII veteran on *American Centuries* into their grade 8 curriculum. *Secondary audiences* that will also benefit from access to the museum's resources online include the general public, such as a local Polish genealogy group (see letter) and more widely, organizations such as the Smithsonian that found an image on *American Centuries* that is now exhibited in the Museum of the American Indian in NYC.

Involvement in planning – Our primary audience has been actively involved in initial project planning; in addition to gathering input through work to support teaching in the COVID crisis, *nine area teachers representing our three counties, diverse grade levels, and disciplines, have worked with us to develop this proposal*, including identifying priorities for additions. For example, while planning the project, educators requested additional content on African American history and local Indigenous presence; as a result, we have added leading scholars on these topics to guide the project. **Most importantly, project beneficiaries will be co-designers in planning the new website.** As with the creation of the original *American Centuries* website 20 years ago, our primary audience will be actively involved in planning the website. A core group of area educators will work closely with the website designer to re-envision the website to best meet student needs. We will also gather and integrate into our planning input from a larger group of 500 educators. User input will be solicited on *American Centuries*. Secondary audiences will also be involved in user testing and feedback as the site is created.

Advancing PVMA's Strategic Plan – The project will advance four priorities of PVMA's strategic plan, *Programs for Teachers and Schools*, *Technology*, *Organizational and Community Development* and *Collections and Exhibits*. In 2020, the PVMA Council updated the Strategic Plan to include assessing and responding to community needs resulting from the *COVID pandemic*. The strategic plan specifically identifies websites and African American content as priority

areas in *Programs for Teachers and Schools.* Under the priority of *Technology*, education programs and African American content-related initiatives likewise receive priority. Creating a new *American Centuries* will increase audience access to *Collections.* The *Community* has long looked to PVMA's collections and interpretive materials to assist them in resolving difficult social issues (e.g. problematic depictions in murals and sports mascots); the new website will make trusted historical resources readily available. The project responds to needs stemming from the *COVID crisis,* which has made the availability of online resources more important to audiences, especially educators.

Goals of Museums for America and Lifelong Learning Category

Goals of Museums for America and Lifelong Learning Category – *American Centuries: View from New England* addresses all four **IMLS agency-level goals** of Promoting Lifelong Learning: **a)** *digital literacies* (website), **b)** *inquiry-based learning* (primary sources to explore history), **c)** *continuous learning for families and individuals* (used by students and the public), and **d)** *the distinctive role of museums as trusted sources of information* (see above). This project directly aligns with the category of **Lifelong Learning**, as the *American Centuries* project *empowers students through experiential and cross-disciplinary learning and discovery.* Undergirded by best practices, this project positions our museum to continue its unique role of providing high-quality *inquiry-based resources within today's formal and informal learning ecosystem.* The project creates a *digital learning resource* and *programs in support of K-12 school curricula.*

THE PROJECT WORK PLAN involves audiences, scholars, and a digital media team to create a new *American Centuries* website which will provide a high-quality place-based educational resource, with a diversity of perspectives to increase student engagement in learning.[3] Audience participation in planning is similar to the process used to create the original *American Centuries*, a method with demonstrated success in attracting and serving wide audiences.

Activities, When and in What Sequence – (see *Schedule of Completion*)

Phase One – Envisioning/Audience Co-Design of New Website – September 1, 2021- January 1, 2022

   Audience Input – *Surveys to 500 educators* (including NEH *Landmarks* participants) from the region and throughout the country will gather input on needs for the new website, including their use of the site in classrooms, priorities for retention of features, and desires for new content. The survey will be designed by our professional evaluator to collect comparable data on the website's efficacy after it has been redesigned. *General audience input* will be solicited with a request for feedback on the current website's homepage.

   Educator Audience Co-Design with Web designer – Five educators from elementary, middle, and secondary grade levels and in special education from our three counties and Boston, will collaborate with our web designer and education director to envision a new website. The web designer will facilitate two half-day working sessions with these educators to collaboratively and creatively conceive the new website, including identifying and prioritizing the most important existing features, functionality, and content, how these existing features might be updated and improved, and what should be added that is currently lacking. The co-design process will also be informed by the results of previously gathered surveys and other audience input.

   The Digital Media team will review in detail the existing website technology, assets, and accessibility and create a report on its current status. This team will study prior analytics to determine the most popular website features and assets. Dr. Tom Scheinfeldt, historian and a leader in the field of digital humanities, will advise the digital media team as they work to redesign the website to best meet audience needs, including ADA accessibility, and ensure that the team follows current best practices in digital humanities.

   Scholar Review of the *American Centuries* website content will identify priorities for updating scholarship in existing content, and for adding new content. Scholars will also review educator identified priorities for additional content and advise on resources to address those needs. **Scholar Review continues in Phases Two and Three.**

Phase Two – Planning the Website, January 1, 2022 – July 1, 2022

   Technological Planning, Specifications, User Interface (UI)/User Experience (UX) Design, User Testing The digital media team will finalize a plan for site architecture, content management system/databases, media solutions, and image technology. A mock-up of the first draft of visual design will be reviewed by scholars and user-tested with audiences, including an expanded educator advisory group and their students. UI/UX will be revised based on user test findings and scholar review. The plan is to build the new website (retaining the original *American Centuries* core elements) using the WordPress platform with a customized theme or user interface. Proven

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[3] Smith, Gregory. (2002). Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We are. Phi Delta Kappan. 83, no. 8, (2002): 584-594

plugins will provide enhanced searching and support additional interactive features. The user interface will ensure that general audiences as well as educators, students, and people with disabilities will continue to feel welcome on the website and are able to easily access it across the range of digital devices.

Research, Development, and Review of New Content – Museum educators in consultation with teachers and scholar advisors will revise current content and create new content to meet identified priorities. Close attention will be paid to content related to African Americans and Indigenous peoples as scholarship in these areas has evolved considerably. *This work continues in Phases 3 & 4.*

Phase Three – **Build New** *American Centuries* **Website, July 1, 2022 – April 1, 2023** - The new website will be built, tested, and evaluated, and will be made public (promotion to occur in Phase Five) once completed. Intensive work by the digital media team to build the website will follow an iterative development cycle marked by scholar reviews and alpha and beta user testing with students, educators, and the general public. Updates to existing content will be made. The website will retain the popular, signature elements of *American Centuries,* such as the searchable database of interpreted items, engaging interactive features such as the Dress Up activity, and highly visited content such as First Person oral histories. These features will be redesigned for improved usability and mobile access. The new website will be ADA compliant and will be built using open-source technology and with a content management system (CMS) to which PVMA staff may easily add content into the future.

Phase Four – **Expanding Historical Content, April 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024** – The digital media team will train museum staff on how to format and post additional content (e.g. Magic Lens, digital collection, oral histories) using the pre-programmed templates in the new CMS. This coaching will include written instructions for PVMA staff to add to, and sustain, the website into the future with minimal support from technical consultants. A protocol for updates and additions after the grant period will be established, including scholar review.

Museum staff and scholars will focus on creating place-based historical content (research, writing, images) using current scholarship for the new *American Centuries* site on topics that have been identified by audiences, scholars, and staff. Scholars review content before final posting to the website. Additions relating to the Revolutionary Era, and a diversity of perspectives, especially African Americans, Afro-Indians, and Indigenous peoples have been initially prioritized by teachers and are areas in which the museum has rich resources. For example, material related to the Great Falls Fight of King Philip's, or Metacom's War will be connected to present-day controversies around the naming of the village of Turners Falls after the English captain who led the massacre of Indigenous men, women, and children encamped at the Falls. *Content creation continues in Phase Five.*

Phase Five – **Promotion and Dissemination: February 1, 2024 – August 31, 2024** -A widely publicized launch of the new website, spotlighting the new content will occur in February 2024. Announcements will be made via social media. Email and postcard announcements will be sent to all area schools, all Mass. school districts, and the over 1,000 teachers in PVMA's database. We will work with school administrators to provide teacher workshops in schools in our 3-county region on using the new *American Centuries*, highlighting features, content, and classroom integration to meet learning standards and stimulate inquiry-based learning. A children's theatre in-class residency will have students search for local objects on the website to put in a 'memory box' for their towns. Teacher workshops will be provided during school professional development days by museum educators, several of whom are retired teachers. PVMA will also share the new website with educators in other teacher training, such as *NEH Landmarks of American History* workshops (offered most of the last 6 years). Teachers attending such workshops frequently share *American Centuries* website resources district and state-wide. The new website will be submitted for inclusion on websites such as *Best of History Websites, New England History Teachers Association,* and *National Council for the Social Studies.* We will reach out to educators via organizations such as the National Alliance of Black School Educators, the National Indian Education Association, social studies councils, and homeschooling groups. We will also submit *American Centuries* for awards to organizations including Museums and the Web, NEMA, and AASLH.

Evaluation activities will take place in four areas: 1) technical solutions, 2) audience engagement, 3) impact on student learning, and 4) scholarship. *Assessment of technical solutions* will occur intensively in phase two by our experienced digital media consultants and our digital humanities scholar and will continue through the building of the website. Beyond testing and ensuring that all features and functionality work well on all target platforms and devices, we will evaluate the ease of updating by museum staff and accessibility for visitors with disabilities. *Audience Engagement* – Teacher advisors will test website features with their students, providing feedback at key points in the site's development. We will conduct periodic user tests with the general public at libraries, with

visitors to the museum, and coffee shops where people are using the public Wi-Fi, etc. **Impact on students** will be assessed through surveys to teachers *to measure classroom use and efficacy* of the website with students prior to the rebuild, as well as after the new website is launched. Student impact will also be assessed with pre and post assessment tools created by our professional evaluator to gauge *impact on student interest and knowledge* during user testing and after the new website is completed. **Evaluation of scholarship** will be conducted throughout the project by scholar review of the content on the original website and review of all new content to be added.

Project Risks and Risk Mitigation – **Technological risks** include 1*) an off-the-shelf software platform might overly limit the features* relied upon by our audiences. That risk is mitigated by working with our original digital designer along with a developer experienced in using WordPress with museum websites that include large databases of resources and interrelated features. The developer has assessed *American Centuries* features with our web designer and has determined that the signature features on the current website are deliverable using the WordPress platform; 2) We may *risk losing the rich interactivity when we translate a user interface originally designed for desktops into one that is mobile-friendly.* We can *mitigate this risk* by breaking down complex activities into smaller, sequenced user experiences; 3) A website on which additions are easily made is *at risk of losing its design integrity and of becoming disorganized and difficult for users to navigate.* This risk *is mitigated* by digital team coaching of museum staff including documented protocols for maintaining the quality of UI/UX; as well as future budgeting for consultation by the digital team; **Content Risks**- A website in which content is easily added *risks not maintaining scholarly standards.* This *risk will be mitigated* by periodic scholarly review by a PVMA academic advisory committee. **Risks of the COVID-19 Crisis** – Meetings and user testing may still be challenging to conduct in-person. This risk is *mitigated by* skills and resources to conduct meetings remotely. If needed, we will design student and other audience user testing to be conducted virtually.

The Project Team is extraordinarily well-qualified. The **management team** includes the Project Director, Tim Neumann, PVMA Executive Director, with experience in overseeing large website projects; Jeanne Sojka, PVMA Business Manager, has administered many large federal grants; and Louise Neidle, Project Manager, an expert in project facilitation who has a successful track record in facilitating diverse perspectives and work styles into a shared vision, culminating in a high-quality website product for PVMA.

   Museum staff include Lynne Manring, *Education Director*, an historian and an experienced, effective provider of teacher professional development, will assist in re-designing the website, and with her staff will create new website content and provide teacher training. Ray Radigan, *Curator,* will bring expertise on the collections, interpretation, and photography. Jeanne Solensky*, Librarian,* recently hired from *Winterthur*, will oversee additions from library collections. PVMA's highly qualified *IT consultant* Dr. David Eve (Mass. College of Liberal Arts) and his students will provide technical support and ensure that the project is integrated into PVMA's technological infrastructure.

   Scholar advisors bring current scholarship, diverse perspectives, digital humanities expertise, and experience with educators and humanities websites. Scholars include Dr. Margaret Bruchac, Abenaki scholar, a historian of the Indigenous peoples from this region; Dr. Thomas Doughton, Afro-Indian scholar, an authority on intersections of Indigenous people and African Americans in Massachusetts; Dr. Joanne Melish, a leading scholar on African American history as well as pedagogical approaches to teaching the subject; Dr. Barbara Mathews, an expert on the Revolutionary era, with experience working with educators covering the sweep of American history using the *American Centuries* website; and Dr. Tom Scheinfeldt, an historian at the forefront of the field of digital humanities.

   Educator advisors – *Five educators* have committed to co-design the new *American Centuries* website with the website designer. These educators teach in all three counties of the museum's primary service area and the Boston area; they include special education teachers and elementary, middle, and secondary teachers (list attached). Three to five additional educators will join this team in Phase Two to alpha and beta test the website as it is developed.

   Evaluation of student impact will be led by Theresa Bruckerhoff, Vice President, Curriculum Research and Evaluation, Inc. (CRE) who specializes in the evaluation of student learning and educational approaches.

   The Digital Media Team, led by Juliet Jacobson, brings over 20 years' experience developing humanities websites and has designed PVMA's award-winning websites, including the original *American Centuries.* Ms. Jacobson's websites have been recognized by Museums and the Web, Best of the Web, NEH EDSITEment, Best of History Web Sites, and AASLH. Juliet will work with David Caldwell, a developer with expertise in using WordPress for museum websites, including Mystic Seaport Museum. Don Button, the developer who has maintained *American Centuries* for many years, will advise the project to facilitate a smooth transition from the existing website. Dr. Tom Scheinfeldt, a leading expert in digital humanities, will advise the team.

- There will be **no formal institutional partners engaged in this project.**
- ***When and what sequence will your activities occur*** *See Activities, above and schedule of completion*

Needed Resources – A veteran of website projects, PVMA is aware of the time required to complete a major website, which is reflected in our three-year work plan. Involvement by the top leadership of the museum, key museum staff, and longtime knowledgeable consultants bring the skills necessary for this project. Institutional support by the PVMA board of directors, evidenced by their financial contributions in support of the effort, is also important to the project's success. The resources of the museum's broad, well-documented curatorial and library collections are central to the project. $193,777 in matching funds is needed and committed by PVMA to carry out the activities; funding for the match will be secured from general operations, individual donors, and grants. PVMA's strong relationships with area schools and the enthusiastic commitment of educators will support the effective promotion of the new website. The museum has technology infrastructure to support the project, including gigabit broadband internet, scanners, video and photography equipment, and Wi-Fi throughout our campus.

Tracking progress toward achieving results – A detailed work plan with intermediate benchmarks will be used to track progress. Our project manager has a proven record of managing major website projects on time and on budget with PVMA; she is vigilant about communication, regular meetings, monitoring timelines and budgets, seeking updates on inevitable unexpected challenges, and subsequent adapting of strategies, timelines, and budget – while keeping intended results, outcomes and deadlines in the forefront. Progress toward achieving intended impact will be tracked by formative evaluation embedded in the project, including user testing by educators, students, and the general public of the website under development, and scholar review of created materials.

Sharing Project Results – The management team will oversee a detailed schedule of venues to share project results to diverse audiences (educator, museum, general public) by museum staff and the digital media team. The newly created *American Centuries* website will be shared with teachers in professional development activities, as well as in conferences. It will be submitted for inclusion in websites providing teacher resources and shared in professional organizations (see p.4). We will share what we have learned from the project, including effective strategies for a teacher co-design process as well as design and technological solutions for rejuvenating an aging, yet beloved website to the museum community at conferences and in publications, such as *Museums and the Web*, New England Museum Association, Mass History Conference, and American Association for State and Local History.

PROJECT RESULTS   *Intended results and how it addresses needs.* The project's intended result is a new *American Centuries* website, which addresses the *three identified needs*:

   1) Need for place-based and high-quality primary resources with which to teach history and social studies The new *American Centuries* website will address this need by retaining and expanding the exemplary and proven place-based education resources from diverse multiple perspectives, which foster inquiry-based learning and student interest and enthusiasm in learning about American history. Audience review of the existing website will ensure that the most effective features of *American Centuries* are retained and enhanced. User testing will ensure that the website is engaging to users. **Results** – *Unique visitors* to the website *will increase by (target 35-50%). Website features (target of 90-100%) prioritized by educators will be retained* in the new website. *Length of user visits will increase (target 50 %). Teachers (80%* target) will increase the use* of *American Centuries* in their teaching and will report that *the new website better meets student needs (target 80%).* (*80% is a realistic goal given PVMA's documented 100% positive educator satisfaction of recent teacher professional development programs.)

   2) Needs for Technological and Design Infrastructure – The new technical infrastructure will ensure that the content and features of *American Centuries* continue to be available to our community of local teachers and wider audiences. A mobile-friendly user interface will increase use, especially among younger audiences. The new website will be ADA accessible. It will be built using a well-supported and widely used CMS platform, which provides more affordable sustainability and longevity. **Results** The American Centuries website will *no longer be at risk of collapsing.* The modern re-design will result in significant increases in visitation and in the length of stays (*described above*).

   3) Need for updated and additional historical content – The intended result is to infuse the new website with current scholarship and new materials to meet educator audience needs. Existing content will be updated as advised by scholars and additional scholar-vetted resources will be added. The website's new CMS platform will enable the

museum to continue to meet teacher requests for content additions independently beyond the grant period. **Results – ** Content revisions and additions will be made in all four sections of the current site; a total of 200-300 additions and revisions will be made in content areas important to our community. Area educators will plan to use new content in their teaching (**target 60%**) and we will see commensurate visitation of new content.

Changing Knowledge, Skills, Behaviors, and Attitudes – We expect a **35-50% increase in annual website** visitors by the end of the project, a change in audience behavior. Knowledge about and interest in American history will be enhanced in our audiences. Place-based and diverse histories increase students' interest in learning as they experience the relevance of American history to their lives. We aim for pre/post student user tests to show at least **50% increases in interest and knowledge**. Prior evaluations of the website document the website's impact on student engagement and knowledge (e.g. an 80% increase in student knowledge and interest in learning was documented in two schools using *American Centuries* resources in *a year-long* place-based teaching program). This project will retain this proven impact and will expand that impact through improved access by mobile platforms as well as new content. We anticipate similar increases in interest and knowledge in other audiences.

Collecting and Reporting Data

Website Visitation Data – Data tracking the number of visitors to the website will be generated using *Google Analytics*, reporting the pages visited and length of visits. Google Analytics will be reviewed monthly by our IT staff.

Educator Assessment and Usage Data – Working with our professional evaluator, *Theresa Bruckerhoff, CRE,* we will collect data from educators regarding the website. The initial survey of 500 teachers at the outset of the project will collect data about teacher usage of the site in their classrooms and the extent to which the site meets student needs. Data will also be collected about technological challenges with the website, the most important website features to retain, and additional history content needed. A follow-up survey after the launch of the website will measure the extent to which the new *American Centuries* meets teacher needs in design, content, and features and whether they expect to use the new website in their classrooms.

New Historical Content Data – Education staff will track the number of revisions and additions of website content, as well as the success in fulfilling teacher and scholar requests in identified priority areas.

Audience Interest in and Knowledge of History Data - User testing, conducted by the web designer with students, teachers, and the general public will provide data about the new site's **effectiveness in engaging users to explore content** as the website is developed. We will also collect data on the website's efficacy on a variety of platforms (mobile, laptop, etc.) **Student user testing** will collect data that measures the website's impact on student interest and knowledge with pre/post testing. Ms. Bruckerhoff, evaluator, will create tools and train teacher advisors to collect this data when students test the alpha, beta, and final website in their classrooms. The evaluator will analyze data gathered to measure the impact of website resources on student knowledge and interest in learning.

The *Tangible Product* will be the new *American Centuries: View from New England* website, providing an engaging place-based learning resource with diverse perspectives, which will increase student interest and knowledge.

Sustainability – **Technology -** Our use of open-source tools and established web standards will ensure that the website and data remain accessible and operational. The new site will be built with a popular easy-to-use content management platform (WordPress) that can be expanded, revised, and maintained primarily by museum staff, resulting in *reduced costs* and less frequent need for outside consultants. The museum will maintain a budget line item for system administration and to consult with our digital media team as future features are added and as software updates are needed to ensure smooth integration and uninterrupted access. PVMA's internal IT consultant will monitor integration with other PVMA technological infrastructure. **Hosting Infrastructure –** The *American Centuries* website will be hosted at a professional cloud hosting service, which ensures regular software updates and maintenance. **Historic Content –** Staff will make updates and enhancements to content as needs are identified, using established protocols and templates for historic content delivery. **Teacher Usage** will be sustained by dissemination of the website in PVMA's work with area teachers and teacher training programs. **Audience appeal–** The new content has timely appeal, for example, resources related to the Revolutionary period will be of high interest as the 250th anniversary is celebrated. PVMA's continued commitment to and expansion of resources shedding light on lesser-known histories will be of enduring interest to our community and educators.

Year 1 American Centuries	personnel	Months	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22
Phase 1 — **Envisioning & Audience Co-Design**			▓	▓	▓	▓								
ongoing team communication	project manager		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Monthly management meetings	core team		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Surveys to educators	Evaluator, core team		▓											
Audience input: gather feedback from all sources: surveys, site feedback	proj mgr		▓											
1st co-design workshop with educators	PVMA staff, designer, educators		▓											
notes, sketches, lists	proj mgr		▓											
tech evaluation of existing site	digital team		▓											
assets eval of existing site- sugestions for updating, improving	digital team		▓											
2nd co-design workshop with educators	PVMA staff, designer, educators				▓									
notes, sketches, homework assignments	proj mgr				▓									
document feature, functionality ideas, new additions	digital team, Digital human scholar					▓								
review above	all, including scholars					▓								
revise/finalize documentation	digital team, proj mgr					▓								
Library & collections research	Librarian, researcher, curator					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
Scholar review of website content & review educator priorities						▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
evaluate	Evaluator, core team					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
Phase 2 — **Planning the website**							▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
review & finalize technologies for webserver, content management/databases, search														
Digital scholar consultation	digital scholar						▓							
rethink site architecture: content organization, navigation	digital team						▓							
research media solutions	media & digital team						▓							
inventory image, video, audio archive	media & digital team						▓							
design new database structures, data organization	digital team						▓							
develop first draft visual design	digital team							▓						
evalutate existing themes	digital team							▓						
create static look n feel mockups	digital team							▓						
mock up webpages to UI test features	digital team							▓						
select methods/technologies to implement features/functionality	digital team							▓	▓					
plan, test new image technology	media & digital team							▓						
user test mockups with target audiences	core team										▓			
scholar/advisor review-revise current & create new content	educators, scholars, museum staff						▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
revise UI solutions based on user test findings and scholar review												▓		
plan image processing strategy	digital team											▓		
plan process for transferring data to new database	digital team											▓		
plan production process for all media assets	digital team											▓		
Phase 3 — **Building New American Centuries Website**													▓	▓
reprocess all images, video, audio	media & digital team												▓	▓
create the CMS server	digital team												▓	▓
create the image/media server	digital team												▓	▓
transfer data to new databases	digital team												▓	▓
test and refine content creation interface	museum staff, digital team												▓	▓
content grooming and additions	museum staff, educators												▓	▓
complete page templates	digital team												▓	▓
implement features/functionality	digital team												▓	▓
complete and refine public-facing web pages	digital team												▓	▓
user test of alpha site	core team												▓	▓
refine/revise based on user test results	digital team												▓	▓
continue content additions	museum staff, educators												▓	▓
refine/revise based on additional content	digital team												▓	▓
beta site: content conherent and fully functional	museum staff, digital team												▓	▓
user test beta site	core team												▓	▓
scholar/advisor review	scholars, educators												▓	▓
Phase 3 continues in Year 2														

Year 2 American Centuries	personnel	Months	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
Phase 3 Building New American Centuries Website														
continued														
ongoing team communication	project manager													
Monthly management meetings	core team													
reprocess all images, video, audio	media & digital team													
create the CMS server	digital team													
create the image/media server	digital team													
transfer data to new databases	digital team													
test and refine content creation interface	museum staff, digital team													
content grooming and additions	museum staff, educators													
complete page templates	digital team													
implement features/functionality	digital team													
complete and refine public-facing web pages	digital team													
user test of alpha site, including students	core team													
refine/revise based on user test results	digital team													
continue content additions	museum staff, educators													
refine/revise based on additional content	digital team													
beta site: content conherent & fully functional	museum staff, digital team													
user test of alpha site, including students	core team													
content revisions	Scholars & Museum staff													
Library & collections research	Librarian, researcher, curator													
Primary source transcriptions	Transcribers													
Website available to the public	digital team													
scholar/advisor review														
Consultation with evaluator	Evaluator, core team													
Phase 4 Expanding Historical Content														
written instructions & protocols	digital team													
Scholars & museum staff create new content	Scholars & museum staff													
coaching and training	digital team/museum staff													
Public programming	Piti Theatre													
Phase 4 continues in Year 3														

Year 3 American Centuries			personnel	Month	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
Phase 4	**Expanding Historical Content**															
continued	ongoing team communication		project manager													
	Monthly management meetings		core team													
	documentation		digital team													
	coaching and training		digital team/museum staff													
	Library & collections research		Librarian, researcher, curator													
	Primary source transcriptions		Transcribers													
	Scholars & museum staff create new content		Scholars & museum staff													
	Ongoing evaluation		Evaluator, core team													
Phase 5	**Promotion & Dissemination**															
		Public Launch of website:														
		social media, emails, postcards														
		Teacher survey	Evaluator, museum staff													
		Student impact evaluation	Evaluator													
		Teacher training workshops	Education staff													
		Inclass programming	Piti Theatre													
		Submission to inclusion in educ. Websites	Core team													
		Presentations at Conferences	Core team													
		Submission for awards	Core team													