

Timed Transcript for IMLS Office of Museum Services Webinar: FY2023 Inspire! Grants for Small Museums Applicant Information Session

0:01

Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Inspire Grants for Small Museums Applicant webinar.

0:07

My name is Reagan Moore and I am pleased that you could join me today and that you are interested in preparing an application for the IMLS Inspire Grants for Small Museums program.

0:16

My goal in this presentation is to provide specific information about the Inspire Grants for Small Museums program and make some recommendations that you may wish to consider when preparing your application.

0:27

Since this is a pre-recorded webinar, and you won't have the opportunity to ask questions, feel free to contact me or any of the other staff in the Office of Museum Services to seek answers to your questions, or to discuss a project idea.

0:40

The staff context slide is shown later in this webinar.

0:45

Here are the topics I will cover in today's webinar.

0:48

Where to find information, A program overview, IMLS funding eligibility criteria, Choosing a project category, Project Activities, Allowable and Unallowable Costs, Application Components, narrative review criteria, where to learn more, and application tips, and next steps.

1:11

This is one of a series of prerecord webinars designed to help you find the information you need to create a competitive application for IMLS museum funding.

1:20

Choosing a Funding Opportunity for FY 2023 was pre-recorded and it's available as a video and as a PDF of the slides.

1:29

Plus as a transcript on our website at the link identified here.

1:33

In that webinar, we cover the IMLS vision, mission, and strategic plan with an emphasis on how they influence our grantmaking.

1:40

We also address institutional eligibility, provide a quick overview of all of our funding opportunities, how to find information online with a focus on our website, and we cover the three places you must be registered in order to apply for an IMLS grant.

1:55

We strongly recommend that you view this webinar to get the complete picture of preparing and submitting a competitive application to the Inspire program.

2:03

In addition to this pre-recorded webinar for Inspire, we're providing pre-recorded webinars for all of our grant programs.

2:09

You can find links to these on the grant program landing pages on our website.

2:15

The IMLS website is an important place to find information. When you go to the website, you will see a drop-down menu for grants on our homepage.

2:23

Click on the section titled apply for a grant. This section of our website is for you.

2:30

Each grant program has a landing page on the IMLS website.

2:34

Here, you will find a brief overview of the grant program, contact information for the IMLS staff assigned to this grant program, and your primary point of contact if you have questions, and link to the PDF of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

2:47

The Notice of Funding Opportunity, sometimes referred to as the NOFO, is the official instructions and guidance for how to prepare, complete, and submitted an application for funding.

2:57

The text and information I am using in this webinar derived from the instructions and guidance found in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, NOFO, is available for each of the grant funding opportunities.

3:08

Now let's discuss the Inspire Grant program in more detail.

3:13

Inspire Grants for Small Museums is a special initiative of the Museums for America program.

3:18

The overall goal of the program is to support activities that strengthen the abilities of individual small museums to serve their publics.

3:25

This might be through activities that reflect museums as active resources for lifelong learning, as institutions important in improving the well-being of their communities, or as good stewards of the nation's collections.

3:37

Inspire is all about what your museum needs in order to better serve your public.

3:42

It may well be exactly the same as what the museum across town or in a neighboring street and neighboring state needs. And that's OK.

3:50

The important thing here is that our support should help you to make a local impact.

3:56

Before we jump into the details, we're often asked about numbers of applications and funding success rates, and so here are the figures for the just completed FY 22 Inspire grant cycle.

4:08

As you can see, with just over two point five million in funds available, we were able to fund 59 of the applications we received.

4:18

Let's begin with eligibility requirements for museums.

4:22

To be eligible to apply, museums must be either a unit of state or local government or be a private, non-profit organization that has tax exempt status under the IRS.

4:32

Located in one of the 50 states of the United States of America, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, The Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia or the Republic of Palau.

4:51

It must use a professional staff and by that we mean at least one full-time professional or the equivalent be organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or esthetic purposes.

5:02

Own or use tangible objects.

5:04

Either animate or inanimate, care for these objects, and exhibit these objects to the general public on a regular basis through facilities that it owns or operates.

5:13

Please note, that our statute requires the museum to be open to the public at least 120 days a year in order to be eligible for funding.

5:21

Because of closures related to COVID-19, museums are free to count days prior to the pandemic, or even in the previous calendar year.

5:29

For more details on each of these points, please take a look at the eligibility information and the Inspire Grants for Small Museums NOFO.

5:39

There are a wide variety of museum disciplines in geographic locations where museums are located across the country and determining an institution's size may rest on a number of factors.

5:49

As a result, IMLS invites applicants to consider whether their organization is a good fit for this special initiative, and to make a case clearly within the application's Organizational Profile document for why they think they are a small museum.

6:02

Reviewers will use the information provided in the organizational profile to determine if the applicant made a clear case for being a small museum.

6:10

Applicants should think about a range of attributes that describe their organization, such as: number of staff members and volunteers, estimate of total person hours worked per week, operating budget and sources of revenue, number and types of objects in the collection, size of facility and property, types and numbers of audiences served in size relative to the other organizations of the same discipline or within the same geographic region.

6:40

With this focus on supporting the individual museum...

6:43

What are the characteristics of successful Inspire applications?

6:47

There are four and successful projects address all of them well.

6:49

As you prepare your application, you should keep these characteristics in mind.

6:55

First, Institutional Impact, a project addresses a key goal identified in the institution's strategic plan.

7:02

Second, In-depth Knowledge.

7:05

Your proposal should reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.

7:10

Third, Project-based Design.

7:13

Your work plan should consist of a set of logical, inter-related activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge.

7:20

In fourth, Demonstrable Results, your project should generate measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

7:28

It has been our experience that an unfunded application is one that has failed to deliver convincingly on one or more of these. So, it is a good idea to think about how to structure your application, to show how your project will be strong in each.

7:43

I want to remind you of important dates for Inspire applications.

7:47

Applications are due by 11 59 PM, Eastern Time on November 15th, 2022.

7:53

The deadline is non negotiable, and the time-stamp is auto-generated by the grants dot gov system.

7:59

We will say this over and over again, but start early and submit early.

8:03

That way, if you encounter a difficulty of any kind when submitting your proposal, you'll have some time to resolve the problem.

8:09

Inspire awards will be announced in August 2023, and projects must be scheduled to start on the first day of September 2023.

8:18

Please make sure that everyone involved in preparing your grant application is aware of these dates.

8:24

Regarding how much money you may request, there is only one option in Inspire.

8:28

All requests must be between \$5,000 and \$50,000, including both direct and indirect costs.

8:35

If you ask for less than \$5,000 or more than \$50,000, your application will be rejected and not reviewed.

8:43

There is no cost share requirement for Inspire, so you may include one if your organization will contribute funds toward this particular project.

8:50

It's important to note that if you decide to include cost share in your application, it must be met by the end of the award.

8:57

We will hold you to that figure, so keep that in mind when applying.

9:00

Cost share may be in the form of cash, staff or volunteer time, or third-party contributions.

9:07

It may not be funds from another federal source.

9:10

In terms of how many applications you may submit, there was no limit to the number of applications you can file in response to the FY 23 funding announcement for the Inspire program.

9:20

As you consider the option to submit more than one application, we urge you to think about the capacity of your organization to manage multiple federal awards at once.

9:30

We've made referenced several times to projects here. And so let's take a minute to consider just exactly what that means.

9:39

The Project Management Institute has a good definition, which is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result.

9:48

They go on further to explain that a project is temporary because it has a defined beginning and end in time, and therefore, defined scope and resources.

9:57

The project is unique in that it is not a routine operation, but rather a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

10:05

We recommend that you keep this definition in mind as you conceptualize your IMLS project.

10:11

Think of it as a temporary non-routine set of activities, which collectively have a beginning and an end and time-defined scope, requiring specific resources, which are designed to accomplish a specific, singular goal.

10:26

With that concept of project in mind, let's turn to project categories.

10:30

Second, to choosing to apply to the Inspire Grants for small museums funding opportunity, this is likely to be the most important decision you make about your funding application.

10:40

As you can see here, there are three options: Lifelong Learning, Institutional Capacity, and Collections Stewardship and Access.

10:48

You will find these three areas described under the goals of the Inspire program and the NOFO.

10:53

You will also select your project category on the Museum Program Information Form.

10:58

Why is your decision about which project category to choose so important?

11:02

For one thing, your application will be reviewed by museum professionals who have experience and expertise in these general categories, and, for another, your application will be competing against others who have chosen the same category.

11:14

In short, the entire review process incorporates an assumption that your project aligns with the category you've identified.

11:20

It's an important choice. Also important is identified an identifying project element.

11:26

On the Museum Program Information Form Section 5, we ask that you select the primary element that is core to your proposed project.

11:34

Your choice will help us match your application to reviewers with related experience.

11:41

So, let's take a look at what kinds of activities a project in each of these categories might include.

11:46

In this and the two slides that follow the objectives, provide a list of types of projects that fit within the goal.

11:52

The goals correspond to the Inspire program categories.

11:56

A project on lifelong learning might include but is not limited to: all or part of an exhibit program development for all types of audiences: creating interpretive plans', media, training for teachers, partnerships with schools, or out of school audiences, or program evaluation.

12:14

As you plan your project in this category, we strongly recommend starting with the concept of learner at the center, and build around it.

12:21

Spend time really thinking through who your learners are in this project, and what their needs are?

12:26

It's not likely going to be everybody.

12:28

So, who is it really? What do they want to learn? What do you want them to learn? And what's the best way to go about that?

12:35

We'll get to the whole idea of problems and needs in just a few minutes.

12:39

But a major takeaway here is to be focused in identifying your audience, and then thinking about how you were going to serve them.

12:47

An Institutional Capacity project is likely to include activities that contribute directly to your work to build the capacity of your museum.

12:55

A project in Institutional Capacity might include, but is not limited to, institutional planning and policy development, the recruitment, training and development of museum staff and volunteers, enhancement of technology, such as your website, and evaluation, audience development, and community outreach.

13:15

Our third project category is that of Collections Stewardship and Access, and this includes just about anything you need to do for and with your collections, except acquire them.

13:24

We're very open to projects that have multiple components configured in ways that make sense for you.

13:29

One project might consist of cataloging, taking digital photographs, and updating database records while another might combine digitization activities with rehousing.

13:39

We support conservation projects of all kinds, general, detailed, and environmental surveys, as well as treatments and environmental improvements.

13:48

And you are welcome to incorporate aspects of training and or collections management into these projects if doing so makes sense for your situation.

13:55

It's important to note that in this project category, we encourage a step-by-step: progressive approach to collections work, including conservation.

14:04

This means assessing needs, creating a prioritized list of activities, and following through by doing the most important things first.

14:13

Before we close our discussion on project categories, we want to mention our guidance for projects that could belong logically.

14:19

And more than one, sometimes it's tough to choose and you might be tempted to think about the best strategy, would be to align with more than 1, 2, and maybe even three.

14:28

We advise against that for several reasons.

14:31

The project categories have different goals, and we expect the projects aligned with each will address different problems, use different approaches, and will measure success, and achieving the intended results in different ways.

14:42

So, how can you choose the best category for your project?

14:45

Here are three things we suggest you try.

14:48

Think carefully about what is in the center of your project. Is that the learner will people who engage with you as a result of your project, to create a new exhibition and programming to go with it? Acquire new knowledge, develop a skill.

15:00

Experience a change in attitude about the subject of your exhibit, or is it that your institution that's at the center of your thinking?

15:08

Is your project one that will addressed an important need within your museum?

15:12

Will it result in an enhancement of technology, or new policy, or staff that has received a professional development opportunity?

15:18

Or is your project about the collections when your project results in a better managed, better cared for, or more accessible set of objects?

15:26

A second way to go add, this might be to think about who you want to review your application.

15:31

If you apply under Lifelong Learning, we will put your application in front of educators, learning theorists and professionals with deep experience and understanding how people learn in museum environments.

15:42

Would you rather we put it in front of a combination of experts in museum planning, website design, or policy creation?

15:48

If that sounds right, then it may push you toward Institutional Capacity.

15:52

And if you apply under Collections Stewardship and Access, you can be confident that your application will be reviewed by some combination of registrars, collection managers, curators, conservators, or collections information specialists.

16:05

That seems appropriate.

16:07

And this is most likely your best choice. Still undecided?

16:11

A third strategy to try might be to make a list of all the activities he planned to carry out and then assign each to a project category and then count to see where most of these activities occur and where most of the time and money will be spent.

16:24

That might well provide your answer.

16:27

Our most heartfelt advice and is to choose one project category, study the instructions for preparing an application as well as the review criteria for that category, and write your proposal accordingly.

16:37

As always, if you have questions, call the IMLS staff to discuss them.

16:43

We'll turn now to allowable and unallowable costs for your project.

16:46

Be very careful in preparing your proposal, and include only allowable costs in both your IMLS request and your cost share, if you have one. To do otherwise can hurt your chances of getting positive reviews and being recommended for funding.

16:59

We'll go through some common expenses that are allowable and unallowable, but for details, please see two CFR, Part 200.

17:07

This is the part of the Code of Federal Regulations, covering uniform administrative requirements, cost principles, and audit requirements for Federal awards.

17:15

Fortunately, these regulations are available online as searchable format on the US Government Publishing Office website and a tiny URL link is listed on this slide.

17:25

Of particular interest is Subpart E, Cost Principles, a small section of which is shown on the right side of the slide.

17:34

And the Inspire Notice of Funding Opportunity, we provide a partial list of the most common examples of allowable cost as pictured here.

17:41

These costs may be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for, and, or what you will pay for as part of your cost share.

17:48

Rules about allowability apply to both the grant fund columns and the cost share columns on the IMLS budget form, which you will submit as part of your application.

17:58

We also provide a list of generally unallowable costs, again, both for IMLS funds and for cost share.

18:04

These costs may not be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for, nor can they be part of what you will pay for as part of your cost share.

18:12

In fact, unallowable expenses can't show up anywhere in your proposal.

18:16

As you prepare your application, it's a good idea to compare your list of proposed expenses against these list of allowable and unallowable costs, and against the appropriate set of cost principles.

18:26

If after that, you have specific questions, please contact us, and we'll be happy to help.

18:33

Next up are application components.

18:35

Your application will consist of a series of individual documents, and it's very important to make sure you prepare and submit everything you should.

18:43

These application components fall into three categories in the Inspire Grants for small museums funding opportunity.

18:49

The first is that of required documents.

18:51

All applications must include the documents that are listed here.

18:55

Omission of even just one might result in the exclusion of your application from further consideration.

19:01

Also important to note are page limits.

19:04

If you exceed the page limit specified in the NOFO, you must remove the extras before your application goes out for review.

19:11

That means your reviewer may well see a paragraph or sentence in Mid-air and will wonder about your planning skills and your attentiveness to detail.

19:19

Make sure your content fits into the page limits specified and make sure the number of pages holds when you convert your document to a PDF.

19:27

Two of our required forms are ones you will download through grants dot gov, and they are dynamic.

19:33

By that, I mean that your answers to certain questions will determine which questions you see next.

19:38

These are the IMLS Supplementary Information Form, including the abstract, and the IMLS Museum Program Information Form.

19:47

The second category of application components is that of the conditionally required documents.

19:52

Some applications must include 1, 2, or a combination of these. It's your job to figure out what you're required for yours.

19:59

If you are applying as a non-profit, then you must include your proof of non-profit status issued by the IRS.

20:05

If you were using a federally negotiated indirect cost in your in your budget, and you must include a copy of your final right agreement.

20:13

If you will create digital products during the course of your project, you must complete and submit a digital products plan.

20:20

If you are requesting support for conservation treatment, then you must include detailed condition reports and or formal conservation treatment proposals.

20:29

Just like the required documents, omission of even one might result in the exclusion of your application from further consideration.

20:36

Please note that the term digital product includes digitized and born digital content, resource and assets, software, and research data. If you are creating any of these types of materials, you must include the plan with your application.

20:52

The third group of application components is supporting documents, and here is a partial list of examples.

20:58

Supporting documents are completely optional. You may submit some or none. We urge you to make good decisions here and include only those that supplement your proposal.

21:07

This is not the place to introduce brand new information.

21:10

Rather as the name suggests, they should lend support to your project justification, work plan, and intended results that you've already spelled out in your application narrative.

21:20

For example, have you identified a partner whose involvement is key to the project's success?

21:25

If so, a letter of support or commitment will go a long way to re-assuring reviewers that they are onboard and the project will succeed.

21:33

Pictures can help give reviewers who may not be familiar with your institution, programs, collections, or community, a better idea of what you're describing within your narrative.

21:42

Vendor quotes or equipment specifications show you've done some of the legwork and getting appropriate estimates for project cost.

21:49

We recommend that you be respectful of your reviewers time, and avoid any temptation to include hundreds of pages of extraneous material that is not directly relevant to your project.

21:59

Being judicious really does work to your benefit.

22:02

Supporting documents can make or break an application.

22:05

Include what is important and helpful, and stop there.

22:10

Let's turn to three specific documents that are very important, and about which applicants seem to have the most questions.

22:16

First is the Organizational Profile.

22:18

We ask that you create a two-page document describing your organization.

22:23

On the first page, we ask that you address your organization's mission or statement of purpose, your organization's governance structure, including if your museum is an organizational unit under a larger parent organization.

22:35

For instance, if the applicant is an art museum under a university, and the level of support provided by the parent organization, your service area, and a brief history of your organization.

22:46

On page two of this document, we ask that you describe your organization size using the range of attributes that I shared earlier in this presentation.

22:54

This is where you make your case for being a small museum.

22:59

Next is the strategic plan summary.

23:02

As you read the Inspire NOFO, you will see frequent references to strategic plans or strategic goals.

23:08

IMLS wants to help you achieve your goals.

23:10

And, indeed, we've seen that one of the characteristics of a successful Inspire project is addressing a key need or challenge that faces your museum, and whose resolution is identified in your strategic plan.

23:22

We asked for a summary of your plan, no more than two pages, so that reviewers will be able to understand how your proposed projects activities, will further your institutional goals and objectives.

23:32

To verify its legitimacy, we ask that you indicate when and by whom the plan was approved.

23:38

For some institutions, this might be the Board of Trustees. For others, it might be someone or a group representing the Authority for a division or department.

23:47

A little inside advice, use a narrative format for your strategic plan summary.

23:52

Although infographics and cleverly designed imagery might be just the thing for communicating your strategic plan for some audiences, it typically doesn't work well for our reviewers.

24:01

These two pages are all they have, and they tell us they find a well constructed, thoughtful written summary, the best way to confirm connections to your project. Make it easy for them to see them.

24:14

Recently, the government added a new requirement to all federal awards. Agencies are now required to measure the performance of awardees.

24:21

This performance measurement requirement is different from project evaluation, which is typically included in your project proposals.

24:28

Performance measurement tells us how good a job you did as a federal awardee.

24:32

It helps IMLS understand, manage, and improve our grant programs, and the assistance we provide to applicants and awardees, and it helps us inform internal stakeholders, IMLS leadership, key staff and programs, grants management and finance, and external stakeholders, legislative, and oversight committees, media public about our grantmaking.

24:53

Project Evaluation, by contrast, is all about your project, intended results or outcomes.

24:58

The prompts that help you write your narrative, which we will talk about in a moment, will guide you through a discussion of your evaluation methods.

25:05

We ask you what you need, you are addressing, and what associated results do you want your project to have?

25:12

How you will track progress toward achieving your intended results, and how the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and, and, or attitudes of your target audience will change as a result of your project.

25:22

So, let's turn now to focus on performance measurement, and how we will ask you to plan for it and report on it.

25:30

In the NOFO, we provide a sample chart which applicants may but are not required to use on the left side of the chart, or for commonly used performance measures that IMLS has adopted for this effort.

25:41

Effectiveness the extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results.

25:46

Efficiency, how well those resources, EG funds, expertise, time, are used and cost, are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group.

25:56

Quality, How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group, timeliness the extent to which each task activity is completed within the proposed timeframe.

26:08

Across the top, are the information points we're asking you to use in your statements with examples of each.

26:13

For instance, with data we will collect are listed counts, cost, weights, volumes, temperatures, percentages and hours, as well as qualitative observations, opinions, and feelings.

26:24

For each performance measure, we asked a couple of examples addressing issues that might turn up in museum and library projects.

26:31

Our intent was to make it easy for applicants to see the relationship between this request and the project they are proposing.

26:39

The blank space is where we suggest applicants write their own performance measure statements, and the chart is constructed.

26:45

Such that it can expand to allow as much space as needed.

26:48

We're looking for one statement for each required performance measure.

26:53

You may provide more than one statement per measure, if you wish.

26:56

We do limit the performance measurement plan to two pages.

27:01

And now let's talk about the narrative of your proposal.

27:05

You have five pages to cover three very important issues And the NFL provides lengthy guidance on what the narrative should cover.

27:12

Project Justification. What need problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?

27:19

Describe how you have used demographic information, economic circumstances, condition assessments, and other relevant data from reliable sources to define the need, problem or challenge, and develop the scope for the project.

27:33

Who was the target group for your project, and how have they been involved in the planning?

27:38

Target Group refers to those who will be most immediately and positively affected by your project. Identify the number of individuals in the target group or in each target group if you identify more than one.

27:49

Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?

27:52

Beneficiaries refers to those who are likely to be aided in the long term by your project.

27:57

It may or may not be the same as your target group.

28:00

Identify the number of individuals who will benefit from your project in the long term if reliable and defensible counts are possible, Otherwise, describe the characteristics of the beneficiaries you expect to be served eventually by your project.

28:14

In Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, under Review Criteria, you will find a list of questions that reviewers are asked to consider when they review your proposal.

28:23

It is a good idea to refer to these as you craft your narrative, to be certain you are providing reviewers, clear, solid information.

28:31

You will see that they correspond fairly directly with the prompts you are given to write your narrative.

28:37

Because the need problem or challenge is foundational in your application, keep these points in mind.

28:42

The federal government wants to invest, to result in something getting better as you define your need, problem or challenge. Articulate what will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible.

28:54

Will someone learn something? Develop a skill? Change an attitude?

28:58

Will members of your community be better able to work together to solve problems?

29:02

Will collections be better cared for, or their lifespan be extended?

29:06

Will access to your collections and the information surrounding them be expanded?

29:10

Identify why it is important, this particular change happens.

29:14

Hone your problem definition carefully and in clear, succinct terms.

29:17

Gather and present data that support your problem definition.

29:23

Project Work Plan. This is where you identify who will do what activities, when, and using what resources.

29:29

Note that we ask you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project, and to tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning.

29:37

We'll say more about that in a few minutes. We want you to explain how you will track your progress toward achieving your proposed results, and what you'll do if you need to correct course.

29:47

Reviewers will evaluate your proposal on how well your activities are informed by appropriate theory and practice, whether the goal's assumptions and risks are clearly stated.

29:57

Reviewers want to see that the team you've put together has the experience and skills necessary to complete their work successfully, and, whether your schedule is realistic and achievable.

30:07

We'll also be looking at whether the time personnel and financial resources identified are appropriate for the scope and scale of the project.

30:14

They will consider if you've described a clear methodology for tracking your progress and adjusting course when necessary.

30:21

Your Work Plan will be built on activities, so, it's important to be clear about what an activity is.

30:26

An activity is something that someone does, it has a beginning and an end, just like projects, and you know when you finished it, because it doesn't need to be done anymore.

30:34

It is no longer on your to-do list. An activity is not a goal, a result, or an outcome, rather, it is something you do as part of striving to achieve those. Aim for a reasonable level of granularity in identifying your activities.

30:46

That might be hard, but strive for not too much, not too little, but rather, just right.

30:53

We also ask that you think about risks that are inherent in your particular project, and to tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning.

31:00

Think of it as answering the question, what if there is no checklist of risks, but every project has them.

31:06

The best proposals will show that you are aware of them, and have thought through a plan for dealing with them.

31:11

Look at your activities, and think about what could go wrong.

31:15

Focus on the ones where your experience, either your own or that of your group, tells you, yes, that could happen, and identify steps you would take in response. IMLS knows things go differently than expected.

31:25

We just want you to prepare by identifying implementable options.

31:29

Here are some examples of risks that might be part of a project for which you might seek Inspire funding.

31:34

A project may be structured around interns who will be selected and trained according to a well thought out processes.

31:40

What will happen if one or more interns drops out?

31:43

What's the plan for replacing them mid project?

31:46

A project involving rehousing collections into new museum quality collection storage furniture, might run into delays, in preparing to space, or in the delivery of the cabinets.

31:54

What happens to the collections items? How will the institution ensure that they remain safe and secure?

32:02

Project results, the third section of your narrative should be devoted to articulating your project's intended results. It is equally as important as the project justification and the project work plan.

32:12

This section is your chance to convince the reviewers that your project will result in something getting better.

32:17

A need or problem you identified in your project justification will be addressed directly, and it will be diminished or eliminated altogether.

32:25

We asked you to tell us what data you will collect and report in or in order to measure your project's success.

32:31

If your project will generate tangible products and most do, here's the opportunity to scope to describe them and make the case that they will be useful.

32:38

And, last, but not least, we ask that you tell us how you will sustain the benefit of the project, How will this improvement that you propose to make continue once your grant is over?

32:49

Reviewers will give us their opinions on how well you designed a feasible plan for collecting and reporting data.

32:55

How likely the improvements that you propose will be realized, will the tangible products you plan to create be accessible to the target audience you identified, and whether your plan for sustaining the benefits of the project are reasonable and practical.

33:09

We often hear that defining intended results and success measures is challenging for applicants.

33:15

So it's worth spending a bit of time on this here.

33:17

Let's think back to the questions we referenced a couple of slides ago when we talked about defining need, problem, or challenge that your project is addressing.

33:25

If you said someone will learn something, how will you know?

33:28

If your problem related to segments of your community being better, able to work together?

33:32

How will you know when that has been achieved?

33:35

If collections will be better cared for, how will you be sure and how will you measure better?

33:39

If you're digitizing to expand accessibility, how will you know you've done it.

33:44

All of your results should tie back to your need problem or challenge, you may well experienced tangential benefits and, or positive outcomes, and make sure you identified them as an addition to and not instead of your original intended results.

33:58

Reviewers are likely to see that as a disconnect.

34:03

Many Inspire applicants use logic models and reviewers appreciate their conciseness and focus, there are many excellent resources available to help you construct a logic model.

34:13

And among these are IMLS's Shaping Outcomes, a free online course developed in partnership with Indiana University-Purdue University of Indianapolis.

34:22

It is available at WWW dot shaping outcomes dot org, and it is customized to meet the needs of museum applicants.

34:30

There are downloadable worksheets and numerous examples that you are likely to find relevant to your own work.

34:37

So, to recap, your Narrative has three sections: Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results, and you have five pages for it.

34:45

The sections are all equally important.

34:48

Write clearly address what we ask you to address and keep an eye on those review criteria.

34:53

Are telling you here exactly what the reviewers will look for, so make it easy for them to find it and understand it.

35:00

I want to share with you the places to look for more information such as the IMLS website, where you can find the awarded grant search to learn more about the projects we have funded through the Inspire program.

35:10

The awarded grant search gives you an opportunity to explore our archive of grants that we have awarded in past years, using a variety of criteria, such as institution, name, location, and keyword.

35:21

Your search will provide basic information about the award and a brief description of the project.

35:27

This can be extremely helpful as you put ideas together for your own project.

35:32

We've also posted the narrative and schedule of completion from nine successful applications from 2022.

35:39

To find these examples, go to the sample applications on the IMLS website. Looking at these proposals might help clarify your thinking about your own.

35:49

At this point, I'd like to share a few tips based on our experiences with the Inspire application submission process each year.

35:55

First off, you must submit your application online through grants dot gov.

36:00

IMLS does not accept applications by mail or e-mail.

36:03

In order to register with grants dot gov, you must have an active sam dot gov registration and unique entity identifier number.

36:11

So make sure your registrations for both sites are complete, Your accounts are active, and that any necessary passwords are current.

36:18

These registrations expire periodically, so do not wait until the time to hit the Submit button to check on them.

36:25

You should co-ordinate with any other staff members such as your authorized organization representative, who may hold the accounts or passwords you'll need to submit.

36:33

Both the sam dot gov and grants dot gov websites have robust help features and FAQs.

36:39

If you run into technical issues with either of these sites, you should reach out to their help desk and request a tracking case or ticket number in order to document your issue and attempts at resolving it.

36:49

Failure to have active sam dot gov or grants dot gov registrations by the application deadline is not an excuse for submitting a late application. So, again, start early.

37:01

Important to know, our regulations state clearly that we can make grants only to eligible applicants and submit complete applications, including attachments, on or before the deadline.

37:11

Those are the concepts we must live by, so here are some tips to help ensure that you can you can too.

37:16

Start early.

37:18

You've already done that by participating in this webinar, but don't lose momentum.

37:21

Keep going, Become familiar with the grants dot gov workspace. This has been available as an option for a few years now.

37:28

And it is now the only option.

37:30

It has many good features, including upfront validation, which allows you to correct errors prior to submission, and the opportunity to collaborate with others in creating your application.

37:40

Consider starting in the workspace overview and check out the tutorials.

37:45

Do your background research.

37:47

Make it easy for the reviewers to see that you are up to date and know what you're talking about.

37:51

Revisit the Inspire NOFO frequently and follow the narrative outlined.

37:55

It provides use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections in your narrative to make it easy for reviewers to read.

38:01

Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon.

38:04

The people who will review your application are experts, but they may not be totally familiar with your particular field shorthand.

38:10

Make it easy for them to understand what you mean.

38:13

Check your spelling, grammar, and math.

38:15

It counts with reviewers.

38:17

one of the advantages of starting your work early is being able to allocate time for a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit.

38:24

Ask them to act like a reviewer who's seeing this for the first time.

38:28

Be sure your application is complete. Check it against the table of application components.

38:32

In the note, though, submit to grants dot gov early, so you can correct any errors and avoid any trauma created by technology challenges.

38:41

This is the general schedule of events to show what happens to your application. Once we receive it.

38:46

IMLS staff will review it for completeness and eligibility. And you will hear from us via e-mail if there are any problems.

38:52

From February through June, your experienced and knowledgeable peers will provide scores and comments based on the criteria outlined in the Inspire NOFO.

39:00

Then, IMLS staff will examine your budget, your financials, and your track record with past and current grants.

39:06

We then prepare materials for the IMLS Deputy Director for Museums, and the IMLS Director.

39:12

By law, the IMLS Director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions, and this happens in July.

39:19

In August, we will notify you by e-mail of the award decisions and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers.

39:25

And on September 1, 2023 funded projects begin.

39:30

Thank you very much for your interest in IMLS Inspire Grants for Small Museums funding opportunity.

39:36

I hope you found the information in this webinar helpful.

39:39

Here is a listing of the names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers for program staff and the Office of Museum Services, who are answering questions about the Inspire Grants for Small Museums program.

39:49

We encourage you to contact us with any questions you might have about what you've heard or seen in this webinar, or in the online Inspire materials. We're very happy to help.

39:59

So with that, we wish you good luck, and we look forward to seeing your applications in November.