

# IMLS Office of Museum Services\_ FY2024 Inspire! Grants for Small Museums Applicant Informational Video

0:04

Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services Office of Museum Service Informational Video Inspire Grants for Small Museums Grant Program Applicant Information Session. The goal of this video is to provide an overview of our Inspire Grants for Small Museums grant program, which we call "Inspire" for short, and the process of preparing an application for funding.

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This video is organized into 7 chapters. "What is Inspire?": This section explains the purpose and design of the Inspire grant program. "What Can Inspire Grants Fund?": This section explains the types of projects that can be funded in inspire and the amount of funds that can be requested. "Application Components Introduction": This section describes the types of documents that are needed to create an Inspire grant application.

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"Application Components Organizational Profile": This section is where you will talk about your institution and make the case for being a small museum. "Application Components Narrative": This section provides guidance on composing the narrative part of the application. "Application Components Budget": This section provides details on the information to include in your project budget. "Application Tips, and Next Steps": The concluding section provides a few tips and next steps.

1:23

The complete set of instructions for how to prepare and submit an Inspire grant application are found in the Notice of Funding Opportunity published on Grants.gov and also available on the IMLS website. Please refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the most detailed information to prepare your application. To get the most out of this video, we recommend that you watch it in its entirety. This will give you an understanding of the Inspire grant program, the types of projects that can be funded,

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and the necessary application components. You may also want to review the Inspire notice of Funding Opportunity before, during, and after you watch the video. Notices of Funding Opportunities, also known as NOFOs, are documents that detail the requirements of each of our grant programs for fiscal year 2024. All of our NOFOs can be found at [IMLS.gov\ Grants](https://www.imls.gov/Grants). As you navigate the application process, you can use this video as the reference tool.

2:20

If you'd like to skip to a specific section, please use the time bar below or the links in the description box to navigate the chapters. In this section we will answer the question, "What is Inspire?", providing information on the purpose and intent of this grant program and who it is designed to serve. Inspire Grants for Small Museums is a special initiative of the Museums for America program.

2:46

The overall goal of the program is to support activities that strengthen the abilities of individual small museums to serve their publics. This might be through activities that reflect museums as active resources for lifelong learning, as institutions important in improving the wellbeing of their communities, or as good stewards of the nation's collections. Inspire is all about what your museum needs in order to better serve your public. It may well be exactly the same as what the museum across town or in a neighboring state needs, and that's okay.

3:16

The important thing here is that our support should help you make a local impact. Inspire projects are expected to focus on a key component of your museum's strategic plan. IMLS wants to support your museum in priority areas that benefit your community. Priorities in your strategic plan may connect to a range of activities from exhibitions, educational / interpretive programs, digital learning resources, professional development, institutional planning,

3:45

audience focused studies, and / or collections management, curation, care and conservation. These are the kinds of activities that can be funded in the Inspire grant program. A characteristic of a successful Inspire grant application is making the connection between the proposed project and a key need or challenge that faces your museum and whose resolution is identified in your strategic plan. To help illustrate that connection in your grant application, we ask for a summary of your strategic plan --

4:14

usually 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. The strategic plan summary is your opportunity to make a thoughtful and well-constructed connection between the proposed project and your museum's priorities. Inspire is a grant program for museums. As a museum, you should keep in mind that all applicants must meet certain requirements to be eligible for federal funding.

4:44

Your organization must be located in one of the United States 50 states, its territories, or the District of Columbia. Your organization must be a unit of state, local, or tribal government, or private nonprofit organization with tax-exempt status. If you meet those two requirements, then the next step is to consider what it means to be eligible for IMLS funding as a museum. Museums must: have at least one full time or equivalent professional staff person, either paid or unpaid;

5:11

have a physical location that it owns or operates; have been open to the public for at least 120 days in the year prior to November 15th, 2023; and own or use tangible objects. Museums may be standalone organizations, or they may be part of a larger institution such as a college, university, tribe, or state or local government. Inspire is a grant program for all types of museums. Here's a brief list of some of the types of museums that routinely apply to this grant program.

5:44

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

6:09

Reviewers will use the information provided in the organizational profile to determine if the applicant made a clear case for being a small museum. Applicants should think about a range of attributes that describe their organizations, 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;

6:35

types and numbers of audiences served; and size relative to other organizations of the same discipline or within the same geographic region. In this section, we will answer the question, "What can Inspire Fund?", providing details on the types of projects and associated goal objectives within the Inspire grant program, as well as offer some summary data on the number and type of Inspire projects that were funded last year.

7:02

Inspire grants are designed to support project-based activities, so let's take a minute to consider just exactly what that means. The Project Management Institute has a good definition, which is, "A temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result." They go on further to explain that a project is temporary because it has a defined beginning and end in time and therefore it defines scope and resources. And the project is unique in that it is not a routine operation,

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but rather, a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal. We recommend that you keep this definition in mind as you conceptualize your IMLS project. Think of it as a temporary, non-routine set of activities which collectively have a beginning and an end in time, a defined scope requiring specific resources, and which are designed to accomplish a specific singular goal.

7:55

Keeping our focus on project-based activities, let's look a little further at what characteristics are most often seen in successful Inspire applications. Institutional Impact: The project addresses a key goal identified in the institution's strategic plan. In-depth knowledge: The project design reflects a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter. Project-Based Design:

8:20

The work plan consists of a set of logical interrelated activities tied directly to addressing

the key need or challenge. Demonstrable Results: The project generates measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address. Successful projects most often exemplify all these four characteristics and fit well within the Inspire grant program. It has been our experience that unfunded applications fail to deliver convincingly on one or more of these areas.

8:50

With that concept of project in mind, let's turn to the program goal and its associated objectives. You should align your proposed project with one or more of the associated objectives. The choice of objective should be identified clearly in the narrative, and the choice of objective also informs the choice of project category, which we will discuss on the next slide. After selecting a program objective. This is likely to be the most important decision you make about your funding application.

9:18

As you can see here, there are three options Lifelong learning, Institutional Capacity and Collections Stewardship and Access. You will find these three areas align with your selection of a program objective. You will select your program goal, objective, and project category on the Museum Program Information Form. Why is your decision about which project category to choose so important? For one thing, your application will be reviewed by museum professionals who have experience and expertise in these general categories.

9:46

And for another, your application will be competing against others who have chosen the same category. In short, the entire review process incorporates an assumption that your project aligns with the category you've identified. It's an important choice. So, let's look at what kinds of activities a project in each of these categories might include. In this and the two slides that follow, we include a list of the types of projects that fit within the category and associated objectives.

10:14

A project in 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. As you plan your project in this category, we strongly recommend starting with the concept of learner at the center and build around it. Spend time really thinking through who your learners in this project are and what their needs are.

10:43

It's not likely going to be everybody. 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 at that? We'll get to the whole idea of problems and needs in a few minutes, but a major take away here is to be focused on identifying your audience and then thinking about how you were going to serve them. An Institutional Capacity project is likely to include activities that contribute directly to your work to build the capacity of your museum.

11:10

An institutional capacity project might include, but is not limited to, institutional planning and policy development and the recruitment, training and development of museum staff and volunteers. Our third project category is that of Collection Stewardship and access, and this includes just about anything you need to do for and with collections except acquire them. We are very open to projects that have multiple components configured in ways that make sense for you.

11:39

One project might consist of cataloging, taking digital photographs, and updating database records. While another might combine digitization activities with rehousing. We support conservation projects of all kinds, general detailed and environmental surveys, as well as treatments and environmental improvements. And you are welcome to incorporate aspects of training and or collections management into these projects if doing so makes sense for your situation.

12:05

It's important to note that in this project category, we encourage a step-by-step progressive approach to collections work, including conservation. This means assessing needs, creating a prioritized list of activities, and following through by doing the most important things first. Before we close our discussion of project categories, we want to mention our guidance for projects that could belong logically in more than one.

12:30

Sometimes it's tough to choose, and you might be tempted to think that the best strategy would be to align with more than one, two and maybe even three. We advise against that for several reason reasons. 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 in achieving the intended results in different ways. So, how can you choose the best category for your project? Here are three things we suggest you try.

12:59

Think carefully about what is in the center of your project. Is it 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, experience a change in attitude about the subject of your exhibit? Or is it your institution that's in the center of your thinking? Is your project one that will address an important need within the museum, and will it result in an enhanced technology or a new policy or staff that has received professional development opportunities?

13:29

Or is your project about the collections? Will your project result in a better managed, better care for, and more accessible set of objects? A second way to go at this might be to think about who you want to review your application. If you apply under Lifelong Learning, you will put your application in front of educators, learning theorists and professionals with deep experience and understanding of how people learn in museum environments. Would you rather be put it in front of a combination of experts in museum planning, website design or policy creation?

13:59

If that sounds right, then it may push you toward Institutional Capacity. 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 specialist. If that seems appropriate, then this is most likely your best choice. A third strategy to try might be to make a list of all the activities you plan to carry out.

14:25

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. And that might well provide your answer. Inspire supports projects of all sizes, but there is a specific range of funding available in this grant program. For a small project, your project budget can request a minimum of \$5000 to a maximum of \$25,000 in federal funds with no cost-share required.

14:53

For large project, your project budget can request a minimum of \$25,001 to a maximum of \$75,000 with the one-to-one cost share required. If you ask for less than \$5000 or more than \$75,000 in federal grant funds, your application may be rejected and not reviewed. Remember to keep your budget aligned to the scope and scale of your project, including all costs necessary to complete the proposed activities.

15:20

Cost share can take a number of forms. Among them are cash, staff time, volunteer time, third party contributions, grants from foundations, and support from state or local government. Cost share cannot come from other federal sources. In the Inspire program, small project budgets are not required to have cost share. In the graph on the screen there are 4 examples. The first example is of a total project budget of \$25,000 with no cost share.

15:50

In the three other examples, the IMLS request amount never exceeds \$25,000, but the applicant is choosing to include partial cost share. Large project budgets in the Inspire program are required to have at least a one-to-one nonfederal cost share. In the graph on the screen there are 4 examples. In all examples the IMLS request amount and the cost share are one-to-one. Applicants can choose to have more than the required one-to-one cost share for large projects.

16:20

The amount of applications received and the amount of awards made can vary from year to year. Here is a snapshot of our most recent application and award cycle. In FY23 IMLS made 77 Inspire awards with a total of \$3.4 million in federal funds. We received 234 Inspire applications last year, resulting in 33% of those applications being funded.

16:44

About 44% of the Inspire awards were for project supporting the Lifelong Learning goal,

39% of the project supported the Collections Stewardship and Access goal and 17% of the project supported the Institutional Capacity goal. In this section, we will introduce the components of an Inspire grant application and provide an overview about the required, conditionally required and supporting documents.

17:13

The Inspire Notice of Funding Opportunity includes a complete list of all the application components. Most of these components are created by applicants and saved as a PDF for uploading as part of your application package. In Grants.gov, the table of application components starting on page 8, Section D2A of the NOFO lists which application components are required, as well as those that are conditionally required. For example, some components are included in the application depending on the type of applicant or the type of project.

17:43

Aside from the SF424S and the IMLS Program Information form which are completed in the Grants.gov workspace, all application components must be submitted as PDF documents. These are the required documents. All applications must include the documents listed here. Omission of even just one might result in your applications rejection. Also, important to note, there is a 5-page limit for the narrative.

18:09

If you exceed the page limit specified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, you must remove the extras before your application goes out for review. That means your reviewer may well see a paragraph or sentence end in midair and will wonder about your organizational skills and your attentiveness to detail. So, make sure your content fits into the page limit specified and make sure the number of pages holds when you convert your document to a PDF.

18:35

The second category of application components is that of conditionally required documents. Some applications must include one, two or even all four of these, and it's your job to figure out which are required for yours. If you are applying as a nonprofit, then you must include your proof of nonprofit status issued by the Internal Revenue Service. We will not accept a letter of state sales tax exemption as proof of nonprofit status. If you are using a federally negotiated indirect cost rate in your budget, then

19:04

you must include a copy of your final rate agreement. If you will create digital products during the course of your project, then you must complete and submit a Digital products plan. If you are requesting support for conservation treatment, then you must include detailed condition reports and or formal conservation treatment proposals. Just like the required documents omission of even one might result in your applications rejections. Please note that the term digital product includes: digitized and born digital content,

19:34

resources or assets; and software. If you are creating any of these types of materials, you must include the form with your application. The third group of application components is

Supporting Documents, and here is a partial list of examples. Supporting documents are optional. You may submit some or none. Include only those items that will supplement your proposal. This is not the place to introduce brand new information, rather as the name suggests,

20:03

they should lend support to your project justification, work plan, and intended results that you've already spelled out in your application narrative. For example, have you identified a partner whose involvement is key to the project's success? If so, a letter of support or commitment would go a long way to reassuring reviewers that they are on board and the project will succeed. Pictures can help reviewers who may not be familiar with your institution, programs, collections, or community a better idea of what you're describing within your narrative.

20:33

Vendor quotes or equipment specifications show you've done some of the legwork in getting appropriate estimates for project cost. We recommend that you be respectful of your reviewer's time and avoid any temptation to include hundreds of pages of extraneous material. Being judicious really does work to your benefit, as supporting documents can make or break an application. Include what is important, helpful, and directly relevant to your project and stop there.

21:02

In the following sections of this presentation, we will focus on these application components: Organizational Profile, Narrative, Budget. Go to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for complete instructions on how to prepare and complete all of the application components. In this section, we will go over the Organizational Profile and what you need to include on each page of this required document. We ask that you create a two-page document describing your organization.

21:32

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 (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. On page two of this document,

21:56

we ask that you describe your organization's size using a range of attributes that we shared earlier in this presentation. This is where you make the case for being a small museum. In this section, we will go over the questions you will need to answer in your project narrative and offer details on the review criteria associated with each section: Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and the Project Result. Now, let's talk about the Narrative of your proposal.

22:25

You have 5 pages to cover 3 very important issues and the Notice of Funding Opportunity



provides lengthy guidance on what the narrative should cover. First is the Project Justification. What need, problem, or challenge will your project address and how is it identified? 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.

22:53

Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning? 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, who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project. Beneficiaries refers to those who are likely to be aided in the long-term by your project. They may or may not be the same as your target group.

23:22

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

23:46

It is a good idea to refer to these as you craft your narrative to be certain you are providing reviewers clear, solid information. You will see that they correspond directly with the prompts you were given to write your narrative. Because the need, problem, or challenge is foundational in your application, keep these points in mind. The federal government wants its investment 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.

24:16

Will someone learn something? Develop a skill? Change an attitude? Will members of your community be better able to work together to solve problems? Will collections be better cared for? Will their lifespan be extended? Will access to your collections and the information surrounding them be expanded? Identify why it is important that this particular change happens. Hone your problem definition carefully in clear, succinct terms. Gather and present data that support your problem definition.

24:49

Project Work Plan: If the Project Justification section was the "Why?", the Project Work Plan section is where you identify the "Who, what, when and how". Who will do what activities? When, and using what resources? You should explain how you will track your progress toward achieving your intended results and what you'll do if you need to correct course. We also ask that you think about risks

25:13

that are inherent in your particular project, and to tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning, I'll say more about that in a few minutes. Reviewers will

evaluate your proposal and how well your activities are informed by appropriate theory and practice; whether the goals, assumptions, and risk are clearly stated. Reviewers want to see that the team you've put together has the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully, and whether your schedule is realistic and achievable.

25:42

They'll also be looking at whether the time, personnel and financial resources identified are appropriate for the scope and scale of the project. They will consider if you've described, clear methodology for tracking your progress and adjusting course when necessary. Your work plan will be built on activities, so it's important to be clear about just what an activity is. An activity is something that someone does. It has a beginning and an end, just like projects.

26:11

And you know when you finished it because it doesn't need to be done anymore. It is no longer on your "To Do List". An activity is not a goal or result or an outcome. Rather, it is something you do as part of striving to achieve those. Aim for a reasonable level of granularity and identifying your activities. That might be hard, but strive for not too much, not too little, but rather just right. We also 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.

26:41

Think of it as answering the question "What if?" There is no checklist of risk, but every project has them. The best proposals will show that you were aware of them and have thought through a plan for dealing with them. Look at your activities and think about what could go wrong. Focus on the ones where your experience (your own or that of a group) tells you, "Yes that could happen" and identify steps you would take in response. IMLS knows things go differently than expected, we just want you to prepare by identifying implementable options.

27:11

Here are some examples of risk that might be part of a project. A project might be structured around interns, who will be selected and trained according to well thought out processes. What will happen if one or more interns drops out? What's the plan for replacing them mid-project? A project involving rehousing collections into new museum quality collection storage furniture might run into delays in preparing the space or in the delivery of the cabinets. What happens to the collection items then?

27:39

How will the institution ensure that they will remain safe and secure? Project Results: The third section of your narrative should be devoted to articulating your project's intended results. This section is your chance to convince the reviewers that your project will result in something getting better. The need or problem you identified in your project budget will be addressed directly and it will be diminished or eliminated altogether.

28:04

We ask you to tell us what data you will collect and report in order to measure your

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

28:30

Reviewers will give us their opinions on how well you've designed a feasible plan for collecting and reporting data; how likely the improvements that you propose will be realized; will the tangible products you plan to create be accessible to the targeted audience you identified, and whether your plan for sustaining the benefits of the project are reasonable and practical. We often hear that defining intended results and success measures is challenging for applicants, so it's worth spending a bit of time on this here.

28:57

Let's think back to the questions we referenced a couple of slides ago when we talked about defining the need, problem, or challenge that your project is addressing. If you said someone will learn something, how will you know? If your problem related to segments of your community being better able to work together? How will you know when that has been achieved? If collections will be better cared for – how will you be sure and how will you measure better? If you're digitizing to expand accessibility, how will you know when you've done it?

29:24

All of your results should tie back to your need, problem, or challenge. You may well experience tangential benefits and or positive outcomes, but make sure you identify them as "in addition to" and not "instead of" your original intended results. Reviewers are likely to see that as a disconnect. So, to recap, your Narrative has three sections: Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results, and you have 5 pages for it.

29:52

The sections are all equally important. Write clearly, address what we ask you to address, and keep an eye on those review criteria. We're telling you here exactly what the reviewers will look for, so make it easy for them to find it and understand it. In this section we will provide information on what to include in your Project Budget and Budget Justification and provide some examples of allowable and unallowable costs. An important component of your application is the budget.

30:20

This is the part of the application where you specify all the costs associated with your proposed project. The budget consists of two required components, the IMLS Budget Form and the Budget Justification. The IMLS Budget Form is a fillable PDF that accommodates up to three years of project activities and expenses. The budget should include the project costs that will be charged to grant funds as well as those that will be supported by cost share. If applicable, in-kind contributions to cost share may include the value of services,

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(e.g., donated volunteer or consultant time) or equipment donated to the project between

the authorized start and end dates of your project. All the items listed here, whether supported by grant funds or cost share, must be necessary to accomplish project objectives, allowable according to the applicable federal cost principles, auditable, and incurred during the award period of performance. The IMLS Budget Form can be downloaded directly from the IMLS website.

31:20

As you develop your budget, keep in mind that there are certain costs that are either allowable or unallowable according to federal regulations. The allowability of a cost item for all federal grants are specified in the Code of Federal Regulation or CFR, sometimes referred to as "2 CFR 200" for short, but the full title is "Title 2, Subtitle A, Chapter 2, Part 200 -

31:43

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards". Using the 2 CFR 200 as a basis, we've developed a short-list of allowable costs that are most common to Inspire projects. See page 18 of the Inspire Notice of Funding Opportunity, which includes a partial list of the most common examples of allowable cost. This short list of allowable costs is also shown on the slide. These costs may be part of what you asked IMLS to pay for with federal funds,

32:12

or what you will pay for as part of your cost share. The rules about allowability apply equally to grant funds as well as to cost share. When completing your project budget, be sure to check out all the costs you include, whether grant funds or cost share are allowable. There are also some costs which are unallowable according to the federal regulations and 2 CFR 200. On pages 18 to 19 of the Inspire Notice of Funding Opportunity, we also provide an abbreviated list of unallowable costs. These are also listed on the slide.

32:43

Unallowable 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. In fact, unallowable expenses cannot show up anywhere in your proposal as you prepare your application. It's a good idea to compare your list of proposed expenses against these lists of allowable and unallowable costs and against the appropriate set of cost principles. If after that you have specific questions, please contact us and we'll be happy to help.

33:13

In addition to the IMLS Budget Form, you will also prepare a Budget Justification. This is an opportunity to provide a more detailed narrative format and explanation or justification for the project cost. The budget justification should be written to follow the cost categories in the IMLS Budget Form. In the justification, you will identify each expense and show the method of cost computation used to determine each dollar amount,

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including any that you may have consolidated and summarized on the IMLS Budget

Form. In other words, please show your math. For example, in the section Salaries and Wages, you should identify each person whose salary or wages will be paid with IMLS funds or by cost share. Provide their names and describe their role in the project. Document the method of cost computation by including the base salary or wages for each person and the percentage of time each person is allocated to the project activities,

34:06

which may be shown as a percentage of time, number of days, or number of hours. If cost share is being provided by unpaid volunteers, explain how you arrived at the dollar amount used to represent the value of their services. In the section for supplies, materials, and equipment, you should list each type of supply, material, and equipment you proposed to purchase or provide as cost share for the project. Detail the number and unit cost for each item and explain how you arrive at the dollar amounts.

34:32

You may also provide vendor quotes or price lists as supporting documents with your application. In this final section of our presentation, we offer some Application Tips and Next Steps. We can only make grants to eligible applicants that submit complete applications, including attachments on or before the deadline. So, here are some tips to help you do just that. Start early. You've already done that by participating in this webinar.

35:00

Become familiar with Grants.gov's workspace. 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. Consider starting with the Workspace Overview and check out the tutorials. Do your background research. Make it easy for the reviewers to see that you are up to date and know what you're talking about. Be sure your application is complete. Check it against the table of application components and the Notice of Funding opportunity.

35:30

Make sure all application components are in the proper format and follow the correct naming conventions. Submit to Grants.gov early so you can correct any errors and avoid any trauma created by technology challenges. It's important to get your application submitted online through Grants.gov before the deadline. IMLS does not accept applications by mail or e-mail.

35:53

In order to register with Grants.gov, you must have an active SAM.gov registration and Unique Entity Identifier Number. So, make sure your registrations for both of these sites are complete, your accounts are active, and that any necessary passwords are current. These registrations expire periodically, so do not wait until it's time to hit the submit button to check on them. You should coordinate with any other staff members, such as your authorized organization representative, who may hold the accounts and passwords you'll need to submit.

36:23

Both the SAM.gov and Grants.gov websites have robust help features and FAQ's. 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. Failure to have active SAM.gov or Grants.gov registrations by the application deadline is not an excuse for submitting a late application. So again, start early.

36:51

There are many components to the application, and the Narrative is an essential and critical part of the package. Peer reviewers, museum professionals from all types of museums, will be selected by IMLS to read each application and provide constructive and critical comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed projects. They also base their reviews only on the information contained in the application. So, don't assume that a reviewer or IMLS will know something about your museum or your proposed project.

37:18

To help make sure your narrative is as clear and complete as possible, revisit the Inspire notice of Funding Opportunity and follow the narrative outline it provides. Be sure to consider the review criteria associated with each section of the narrative. Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections in your narrative to make it easy for reviewers to read. Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon, the people who will review your application are museum professionals, but they may not be totally familiar with your particular field shorthand.

37:47

Make it easy for them to understand what you mean. An advantage to starting your application early is that you can ask a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit. Ask them to act like a reviewer who's seeing this for the first time. Here are a few important dates relating to Inspire applications. Applications must be received through Grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on November 15th to 2023. The date is non-negotiable.

38:17

The time stamp is auto generated by the Grants.gov system and we have no ability to override it. We will say this repeatedly, to start early and submit your application early. That way if you encounter difficulty of any kind when submitting your proposal, you'll have some time to resolve the problem. After the application deadline, IMLS staff will review your application for completeness and eligibility, and you will hear from us via e-mail if there are any problems.

38:42

Next, we will select experienced and knowledgeable peer reviewers to read your applications and provide scores and comments based on the criteria outlined in the Inspire Notice of Funding Opportunity. IMLS staff will examine your budget, your financials, and your track record with past and current grants. We then prepare materials for the IMLS Deputy Director for Museums and the IMLS Director. By law, the IMLS Director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions, and this typically happens in July.

39:12

In early August 2024, we will notify you by e-mail of the award decisions and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers. Inspire projects must be scheduled to start on the first day of September 2024. As you read through the NOFO and prepare your application, additional questions may arise before the application deadline. We can help you with learning more about the Inspire grant program or any other grant programs at IMLS,

39:38

Address any specific concerns with the various applications and components or help you understand the review process. You may contact IMLS Program staff by e-mail or phone. Contact information is listed on the Grant Program landing page on the IMLS website. You may also schedule a counseling call to meet directly with program staff. Use the links found on the Grant Program landing page to find an available time slot on our calendars. You will then receive an e-mail with the Calendar invite and Microsoft Teams meeting link.

40:08

Thank you very much for your interest in IMLS and in the INSPIRE Grants for Small Museums funding opportunity. I hope you have found the information in this applicant webinar helpful. Good luck and we look forward to seeing your application in November.