



# Museums for America Grant Program

## Applicant Information Session





# Introduction



# Video Chapters

- 1 **Chapter 1:** What is Museums for America (MFA)?
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# Using This Video

## Watch

Watch this video in its entirety

## Review

Review the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) at [www.imls.gov/grants](http://www.imls.gov/grants)

## Refer

Refer to this video as needed



# What is MFA?

Museums for America

# MFA = Museums for America

MFA supports projects that strengthen the ability of an **individual** museum to serve **its** public.

Activities might reflect museums as:

- active resources for learning and literacy
- institutions important in improving the well-being of their communities
- good stewards of the nation's collections

**Emphasis is on local impact.**



New York Botanical Garden



New Bedford Whaling Museum

# MFA and Your Strategic Plan

MFA 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.



Explora Science Center



Troy University, Rosa Parks Museum



# MFA is for Museums

- Museums must
  - ✓ Have at least one full time or equivalent professional staff person, either paid or unpaid
  - ✓ 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, 2024
  - ✓ Own or use tangible objects
- Museums may be stand-alone organizations, or they may be part of a larger institution, such as a college, university, Tribe, or a state or local government.





# MFA is for All Types of Museums

- Anthropology museums
- Aquariums
- Arboretums
- Art museums
- Botanical gardens
- Children's/youth museums
- General museums
- Historic houses/sites
- History museums
- Natural history museums
- Nature centers
- Planetariums
- Science/technology centers
- Specialized museums
- Zoological parks



# What Can MFA Fund?

# MFA Funds Projects

What is a “project”? A temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result.



Historic Cherry Hill

- A project is **temporary** in that it has a defined beginning and end in time, and therefore defined scope and resources.
- And a project is **unique** in that it is not a routine operation, but a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

# What Makes an MFA Project Successful?



INSTITUTIONAL  
IMPACT



IN-DEPTH  
KNOWLEDGE



PROJECT-BASED  
DESIGN



DEMONSTRABLE  
RESULTS



# MFA Program Goals

**Lifelong Learning:** IMLS supports the ability of museums to empower people of all ages and backgrounds through experiential and cross-disciplinary learning and discovery.

**Community Engagement:** IMLS promotes the ability of museums to maximize the use of museum resources to address community needs through partnerships and collaborations.

**Collections Stewardship and Access:** IMLS supports the role of museum in advancing the management and care of collections and their associated documentation.

# MFA Lifelong Learning

**Goal 1, Lifelong Learning: Empower people of all ages and backgrounds through experiential and cross-disciplinary learning and discovery.**

- Objective 1.1: Support public programs, adult programs, family programs, and early childhood programs.
- Objective 1.2: Support exhibitions and interpretation.
- Objective 1.3: Support in-school and out-of-school programs.



New York Historical Society

*Successful Lifelong Learning projects will provide high-quality, inclusive educational opportunities that address particular audience needs.*

# MFA Community Engagement

**Goal 2, Community Engagement: Maximize the use of museum resources to address community needs through partnerships and collaborations**

- Objective 2.1: Support equitable engagement and inclusive collaboration with diverse and/or underserved communities.
- Objective 2.2: Support efforts to improve access and eliminate barriers to museum services for all audiences.
- Objective 2.3: Support community-centered planning, civic engagement, and resource sharing to address community needs.



Hermann-Grima Gallier Historic House Museum

*Successful Community Engagement projects strive to create a better quality of life within - and with - communities.*

# MFA Collections Stewardship and Access

**Goal 3, Collections Stewardship and Access: Advance the management and care of collections and their associated documentation.**

- Objective 3.1: Support cataloging, inventorying, and registration; collections information management; and collections planning.
- Objective 3.2: Support conservation and environmental improvement and/or rehousing; conservation surveys; and conservation treatment.
- Objective 3.3: Support database management, digital asset management, and digitization.



Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library

*Successful Collections Stewardship and Access projects contribute to the long-term preservation of, increased access to, and expanded use of materials entrusted to the museum's care.*



# Choosing a Program Goal



Lifelong Learning



Community  
Engagement



Collections Stewardship  
and Access

1. Think carefully about what is “in the center” of your project. Who or what will benefit from your work? What will be improved once you’ve finished your project?
2. Decide whom you want to review your application. What kind of skill sets and experience do you want them to have?
3. List all the activities you plan to carry out and assign each to a category. Which category includes the largest number of activities? Where will most of the resources be spent?

# What Size Are MFA Projects?

MFA project budgets can range in size



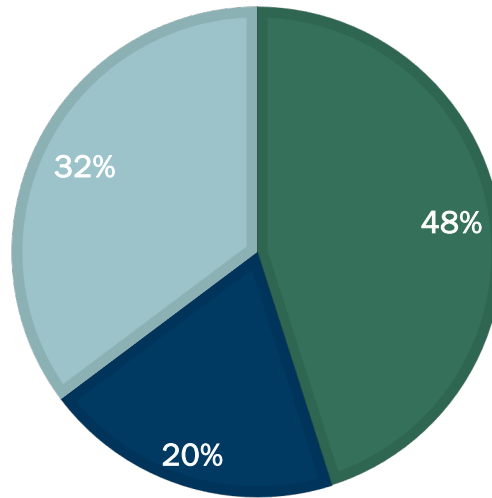
\$5,000 - \$250,000 in federal grant funds with **1:1 cost share required.**

Scale your budget request to the needs of your project.

# How Many MFA Projects Get Funded?

## MFA AWARDS FY24

■ Lifelong Learning ■ Community Engagement ■ Collections Stewardship



In FY24 IMLS made 115 MFA awards for a total of \$23.3M.

# How Many MFA Projects Get Funded?

Home > Grants > Search Awarded Grants

Search by Keywords...

Museums for America FY 2023

Table DOWNLOAD THE DATA

Note: (a) denotes an amendment made outside of the original award Page 1 of 122 results

Log Number	Institution	Fiscal Year	Program	Federal Funds	Funding Office	City	State
MA-253167-OMS-23	Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum	2023	Museums for America	\$250,000	Office of Museum Services	Springfield	IL
MA-253502-OMS-23	Historic Germantown	2023	Museums for America	\$108,812	Office of Museum Services	Philadelphia	PA
MA-252832-OMS-23	Cape Ann Museum	2023	Museums for America	\$194,150	Office of Museum Services	Gloucester	MA
MA-252967-OMS-23	Paine Art Center and Gardens	2023	Museums for America	\$68,614	Office of Museum Services	Oshkosh	WI
MA-252994-OMS-23	Clockshop	2023	Museums for America	\$150,000	Office of Museum Services	Los Angeles	CA
MA-252998-OMS-23	Cameron Art Museum	2023	Museums for America	\$149,000	Office of Museum	Wilmington	NC

The Search Awarded Grants gives you an opportunity to explore our archive of grants.



# Application Components

Overview



# Application Components

The MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) includes a complete list of all the application components.

Most of these components are created and saved as a PDF for uploading as part of your application package in [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).



# Required Documents

These components are required of all MFA applications.

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424S)
- IMLS Museum Program Information Form (including Abstract)
- Organizational Profile
- Strategic Plan Summary
- Narrative (7 pages max.)
- Schedule of Completion
- IMLS Budget Form
- Budget Justification
- List of Key Project Staff and Consultants
- Resumes
- Performance Measurement Plan



# Conditionally Required Documents

These components are required of some MFA applications.

- Proof of Private, Nonprofit Status
- Final Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Digital Products Plan
- Detailed Condition Reports and/or Conservation Treatment Proposals





# Supporting Documents

These components are optional in MFA applications. Include only those that supplement the Narrative and support the project description provided in the application.

- Letters of commitment from partners, consultants, or any third-parties you will work with on your project
- Bibliography or references relevant to your proposed project design or evaluation strategy
- Letters of support from experts and stakeholders
- Relevant images
- Exhibit design plans
- Reports from planning activities
- Contractor or vendor quotes
- Equipment specifications
- Products or evaluations from similar projects
- Collections, technology, or other departmental plans applicable to the proposed project
- Web links to relevant online materials
- Needs assessments

# Application Components Continued

In the following sections of this presentation, we will focus on two application components:

- Narrative
- Budget

The Notice of Funding Opportunity offers complete instructions on how to prepare and complete all application components.



Museum of Craft and Design



Woodland Park Zoo



# Application Components

Narrative



# Narrative: Project Justification

## Tell us:

- Which program goal and associated objective of Museums for America will your project address?
- How will your project advance your museum's strategic plan?
- What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?
- Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning?
- Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?
- *For Collections Stewardship and Access projects: Describe and quantify the collections and/or records that are the focus of your project, and their current condition.*

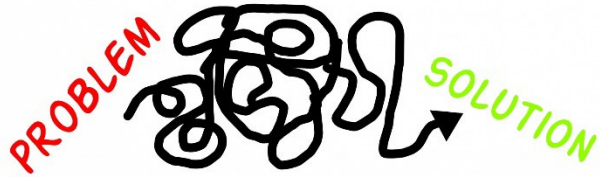


# Narrative: Project Justification Continued

## *Reviewers will look for:*

- How well does the proposal align with the selected MFA program goal and associated objective?
- Does this project advance the museum's strategic plan in specific and measurable ways?
- How well has the applicant used relevant data and other evidence to describe the need, problem, or challenge to be addressed?
- Has the applicant appropriately defined the target group(s) and beneficiaries, as applicable, for this work?
- Have the target group and other project stakeholders been involved appropriately in planning the project?
- *For Collections Stewardship and Access projects:* Are the collections and/or records that are the focus of the project and their current condition described and quantified in enough detail?

# Defining a Need, Problem, or Challenge



- Remember that the federal government wants its investment to result in something getting better.
- Articulate what will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible.
- Identify why it is important that this change happens.
- Hone your problem definition carefully.
- Present data that support your problem definition.



# Narrative: Project Work Plan

## Tell us:

- What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?
- What are the risks to the project and how will you mitigate them?
- Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?
- What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?
- How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?



# Narrative: Project Work Plan Continued

## *Reviewers will look for:*

- Are the proposed activities informed by relevant theory and practice?
- Are the goals, assumptions, and risks clearly stated?
- Do the identified staff, partners, consultants, and service providers have the experience and skills necessary to successfully complete the work?
- Are the time, financial, personnel, and other identified resources appropriate for the scope and scale of the project?
- If present, does the Digital Products Plan reflect appropriate practices and standards for creating and managing the types of digital products proposed?
- Will the proposed methods for tracking the project's progress toward achieving the intended results allow course adjustments when necessary?
- Will the proposed methods for tracking the project's progress provide reliable and measurable information about the project results?



# Defining an Activity



- An activity is something that someone does.
- It has a beginning and an end.
- You know when you've finished it because it doesn't need to be done any more (or it is no longer on your To Do List).
- It is not a “goal,” “result,” or “outcome.” It is a thing you do as part of striving to achieve those.
- Aim for a reasonable level of granularity in identifying your activities—not too much, not too little, just right.



# Defining Risks

- Every project has potential risks.
- Show that you are aware of the risks and have a plan for dealing with them.
- Answer the question, “What if?”

## Examples of Risk

- What if cost-share funding is unavailable by the time the project starts?
- What if a key community partner or consultant is unavailable?
- What if there’s a delay in the delivery of essential materials or equipment?



# Narrative: Project Results

## Tell us:

- What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified?
- How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the target group change as a result of your project?
- What products will result from your project, and how will you make them accessible to the target group?
- How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance?
- *For Collections Stewardship and Access projects:* How will the care, condition, management, access to, or use of the museum collections and/or associated data that define the focus of your project improve?

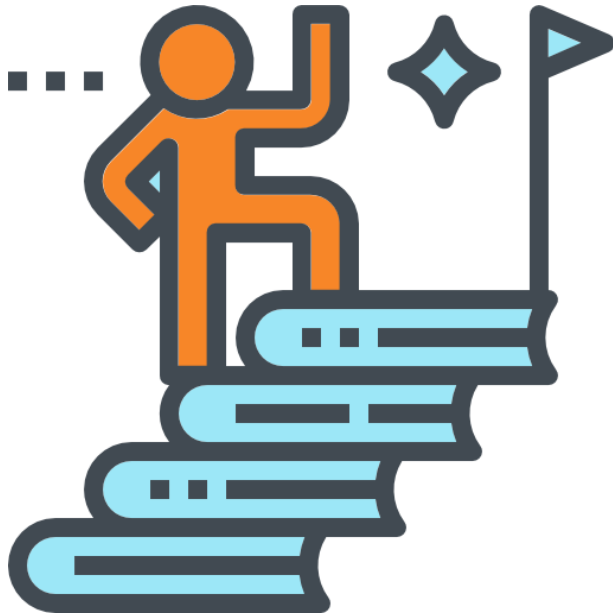


# Narrative: Project Results Continued

## *Reviewers will look for:*

- Are the project's intended results clearly articulated, realistic, meaningful, and linked to the need, problem, or challenge addressed by the project?
- Is the plan to effect meaningful change in knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes solidly grounded and appropriately structured?
- Is it clear that the federal investment made through this grant will generate identifiable benefits to society?
- Will the products created by the project be made available and accessible to the target group?
- Is the plan to sustain the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance reasonable and practical?
- *For Collections Stewardship and Access projects:* Will the care, condition, management, access to, or use of the museum collections and/or records improve as a result of the project?

# Defining Intended Results, Success Measures



- Answer the question, “What will be better as the result of this work?”
- Know how you will measure success for each of your high-level activities.
- Tie everything back to your need, problem, or challenge.
- Consider constructing a logic model or using an outcomes-based evaluation tool to explain your intended results and your plan for achieving them.



# Narrative Recap

- Your Narrative has three sections—Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results
- 7-page maximum
- Refer to the review criteria in Step 6 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity



# Application Components

Budget

# IMLS Budget Form

## IMLS BUDGET FORM

- a. Legal name (5a from SF-424S):
- b. Requested Grant Period From: (MM/DD/YYYY)  Through: (MM/DD/YYYY)
- c. If this is a revised budget, indicate application/grant number:

### 1. Salaries and Wages

Name/Title or Position	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Total		
	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grand Total
Subtotal									

### 2. Fringe Benefits

Rate and Base	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Total		
	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grand Total
Subtotal									

The IMLS Budget Form 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.





# Allowable Cost Examples

- ✓ personnel salaries, wages, and fringe benefits
- ✓ travel expenses for key project staff and consultants
- ✓ materials, supplies, software, and equipment related directly to project activities
- ✓ equipment to improve collections storage and exhibit environments
- ✓ third-party costs
- ✓ publication design and printing
- ✓ program evaluation
- ✓ staff and volunteer training
- ✓ paid internships/fellowships
- ✓ indirect or overhead costs



# Unallowable Cost Examples

- general fundraising costs
- contributions to endowments
- general operating support
- acquisition of collections
- general advertising or public relations costs
- construction or renovation of facilities
- social activities, receptions, or entertainment
- research projects



# Budget Justification

The Budget Justification is an opportunity to provide, in a more a detailed narrative format, an explanation or justification for the project costs itemized in the IMLS Budget Form. For example:

- In Salaries and Wages you should identify each person whose salary or wages will be paid with IMLS funds or included as cost share. 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 Supplies, Materials and Equipment you should list each type of supply, material, and equipment you propose to purchase or provide as cost share for the project. Provide vendor quotes or price lists as Supporting Documents with your application.



# Application Tips and Next Steps



# Application Tips

We can make grants only to **eligible** applicants that submit **complete** applications, including attachments, **on or before the deadline**. So...

- ✓ Start early.
- ✓ Become familiar with Grants.gov Workspace. See <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>
- ✓ Do your background research.
- ✓ Be sure your application is complete.
- ✓ 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.

# Application Tips Continued

Check your registrations and know your usernames and passwords.



System for Award Management ([www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov))

- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)
- Registration must be renewed every year!

Grants.gov ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov))

- Passwords expire every 60 days!
- Accounts are deactivated after 365 days of inactivity.



**START EARLY, DON'T DELAY**



# Additional Application Tips

Peer reviewers will be selected by IMLS to read each application and provide constructive comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed projects.

To help make sure your Narrative is as clear and complete as possible:

- ✓ Follow the Narrative outline in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- ✓ Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections in your Narrative.
- ✓ Consider the review criteria associated with each section of the Narrative.
- ✓ Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon.
- ✓ Ask a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit it.

# Sample Applications

Home > Grants > Apply for a Grant > Sample Applications

## Sample Applications

- Grant Programs >
- Apply for a Grant ✓
- Eligibility Criteria
- Sample Applications
- Notices of Funding Opportunities >
- Outcome Based Evaluations >
- Manage Your Award >

### Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

#### Lifelong Learning

- Iroquois Indian Museum (PDF, 940KB)
- Muncie Children's Museum (PDF, 339KB)
- Museum of Craft and Design (PDF, 455KB)

#### Institutional Capacity

- SEE Science Center (PDF, 335KB)

#### Collections Stewardship and Access

- The Black Mountain College Museum & Arts Center (PDF, 189KB)
- Historic Saranac Lake (PDF, 270KB)
- Midwest Miniatures Museum (PDF, 396KB)
- Franklin Historical Society (PDF, 309KB)

## Museums for America

### Lifelong Learning

- Bishop Museum (PDF, 582KB)
- Clyfford Still Museum (PDF, 281KB)
- Explora (PDF, 266KB)
- Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum (PDF, 334KB)
- Museum of Discovery and Science (PDF, 362KB)
- National Building Museum (PDF, 890KB)
- New-York Historical Society (PDF, 305KB)
- Sciencenter (PDF, 1MB)
- Tampa Museum of Art (PDF, 394KB)
- Whitney Museum of American Art (PDF, 643KB)

### Community Engagement

- Building for Kids (PDF, 813KB)
- Chicago History Museum (PDF, 745KB)
- Parrish Art Museum (PDF, 375KB)
- Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PDF, 423KB)
- Washington State Historical Society (PDF, 1MB)

### Collections Stewardship and Access

- American Folk Art Museum (PDF, 392KB)
- American Museum of Natural History (PDF, 329KB)
- Southern Illinois University (University Museum) (PDF, 1.5MB)
- Georgia O'Keeffe Museum (PDF, 461KB)
- Shelburne Museum Inc (PDF, 477KB)
- Amherst College (Emily Dickinson Museum) (PDF, 389KB)
- Victoria Mansion (PDF, 359KB)





# Important Dates and Times

Applications are due by **11:59 pm EST** on **November 15, 2024.**

- Awards will be announced in **August 2025.**
- Projects must start **September 1, 2025.**



## Next Steps

Connect with IMLS Program Staff in the Office of Museum Services to ask questions about the:

- MFA grant program
- Application Components
- Review Process

<https://www.ims.gov/grants/available/museums-america>

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