FY25_MFA_Applicant_Webinar_Video

0:04
Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Office of Museum Services Informational Video Museums for America Grant Program Applicant Information Session.

0:14
My name is Mark Feitl, one of the program staff in the Office of Museum Services at IMLS, and I'll be narrating this presentation.

0:27
The goal of this video is to provide an overview of our Museums for America grant program, which we call MFA for short, and the process of preparing an application for funding.

0:41
This video is organized into six chapters.

0:44
What is Museums for America?

0:46
This section explains the purpose and design of the MFA grant program.

0:50
What can MFA grants fund?

0:53
This section explains the types of projects that can be funded in MFA and the amount of funds that can be requested.

0:59
Application Components: Introduction. This section describes the types of documents that are needed to create an MFA grant application.

1:08
Application Components: Narrative. This section provides guidance on composing the narrative part of the application.

1:16
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.

1:30
The complete set of instructions for how to prepare and submit an MFA grant application are found in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, published on grants.gov and available on the IMLS website.

1:40
Please refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the most detailed information to prepare your application.

1:46
To get the most out of this video, we recommend that you watch it in its entirety.

1:55
This will give you an understanding of the MFA grant program, the types of projects that can be funded, and the necessary application components.

2:03
You may also want to review the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity before, during, and after you watch the video.

2:10
Notices of Funding Opportunities, also known as NOFOs, are documents that detail the requirements of each of our grant programs.

2:18
All of our NOFOs can be found at IMLS.gov/Grants.

2:21

2:24
As you navigate the application process, you can use this video as a reference tool.

2:28
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.

2:40
In this section.

2:41
I will answer the question, what is MFA providing information on the purpose and intent of this grant program and who it is designed to serve.

2:52
Museums for America is our largest grant program, receiving the largest number of applications each year and the one through which we make the largest number of awards.

3:01
The overall goal of the program is to support activities that strengthen the abilities of individual museums to serve their publics.

3:08

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.

3:20

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

3:25

It may well be exactly the same thing as with the museum across town or in a neighboring state need.

3:30

And that's OK.

3:31

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

3:36

Impact MFA projects are expected to focus on a key component of your museum strategic plan.

3:47

IMLS wants to help advance something that is a priority for your museum and something that will ultimately benefit your community.

3:55

To help demonstrate that connection in your grant application, we asked for a summary of your Strategic Plan, 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.

4:10

The Strategic Plan summary is your opportunity to make a thoughtful and well-constructed connection between the proposed project and your museum's priorities.

4:19

The priorities in your Strategic Plan may connect to a range of activities from exhibitions, educational interpretive programs, digital learning resources, professional development, community debate and dialogue, audience based focused studies and collections management, curation, care and conservation.

4:38

These are the kinds of activities that can be funded in the MFA grant program.

4:43

A characteristic of a successful MFA 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.

4:59
MFA is a grant program for museums.

5:02
As a museum, you should keep in mind all that all applicants must meet certain requirements to be eligible for federal funding.

5:09
Your organization must be located in one of the United States, 50 states, its territories, or the District of Columbia.

5:16
Your organization must be a unit of state, local, or tribal government, or a private nonprofit organization with tax exempt status.

5:25
If you meet those two requirements, then the next step is to consider what it means to be eligible for IMS funding as a museum.

5:33
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 grant application deadline, which is November 15th, 2024, and own or use tangible objects.

5:55
Museums may be stand-alone organizations, or they may be part of a larger institution such as a college, university, Tribe, or state or local government.

6:07
MFA is a grant program for all types of museums.

6:10
Here's a brief list of some of the types of museums that routinely apply to this grant program.

6:19
In this section we will answer the question What can MFA fund?

6:23
Providing details on the types of projects and associated goals and objectives within the MFA grant program, as well as offer some summary data on the number and type of MFA projects that were funded last year.

6:37
MFA grants are designed to support project-based activities, so let's take a minute to consider just exactly what that means.

6:45
The Project Management Institute has a good definition which is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result.

6:54
They go on further to explain that a project is temporary because it has a defined beginning and end in time and therefore defines scope and resources.

7:03
And a project is unique in that it is not a routine operation, but rather a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

7:12
We recommend that you keep this definition in mind as you conceptualize your IMLS project.

7:18
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.

7:34
Keeping our focus on project-based activities, let's look a little further at what characteristics are most often seen in successful MFA applications.

7:43
Institutional impact:

7:45
The project addresses a key goal identified in the institution Strategic plan.

7:50
In depth knowledge:

7:52
The project design reflects a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.

7:58
Project based design:

8:00
The work plan consists of a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge.

8:07

Demonstrable Results: The project generates measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

8:16
Successful projects most often exemplify these four characteristics and fit well within the MFA grant program.

8:22
It has been our experience that unfunded applications failed to deliver convincingly on one or more of these areas.

8:32
If project-based design and institutional impact are core elements of your project idea, then now it's time to consider how your application aligns with the grant program goals and associated objectives.

8:43
The type of project activity you are seeking to fund should align with one of these three options.

8:49
Lifelong Learning, Community Engagement, and Collection

8:52
Stewardship and Access.

8:55
Why is your decision about which project goal to choose so important?

8:58
For one thing, your application will be reviewed by museum professionals who have experience and expertise in these general categories.

9:05
And for another, your application will be competing against others who have chosen the same category.

9:10
In short, the entire review process incorporates an assumption that your project aligns with the goal you've identified, so it's an important choice.

9:22
So let's take a look at what kinds of project activities might fit within these goal areas.

9:27
In this and the two slides that follow, the objectives provide some of the types of projects that fit within the goal.

9:35

A project in Lifelong Learning might include, but it's not limited to, design and fabrication 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, professional development opportunities for museum staff, or program evaluation.

9:56
As you plan your project in this category, we strongly recommend starting with the concept of Learner at the Center and build around it.

10:03
Spend time really thinking through who your learners in this project are and what their needs are.

10:09
It's not likely going to be everybody.

10:10
So who is it really?

10:13
What do they want to learn?

10:14
What do you want them to learn, and what's the best way to achieve that goal?

10:18
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 thinking about how you are going to serve them.

10:32
A community engagement project is likely to include activities that contribute directly to your institution's role as an essential partner in addressing community needs.

10:41
Successful Community Engagement projects strive to create a better quality of life within and with communities.

10:47
Projects in this category will demonstrate a direct involvement by members of your community and planning your project and as well as in the implementation of activities and the evaluation of results.

10:57
Your application should clearly define who or what the community is that you are serving.

11:03
Many museums regularly undertake activities that engage with their communities, such as exhibitions, public programs, audience development, outreach and evaluation, and civic engagement to name a few.

11:14
So how do you know if your project is a better fit within Lifelong Learning or Community Engagement?

11:20
If your project requires the involvement of community partners to Co-create the content or drive the programming, then it may be a strong fit for the Community Engagement goal.

11:30
If your project involves mostly museum staff working internal to produce content, perhaps with the element of some external input, then it may be a better fit with the lifelong learning goal.

11:40
Both approaches are allowable, and both are fundable.

11:43
Ultimately, it is your choice.

11:45
What's important is that you choose one goal and write your application to align with that program goal and associated objective.

11:56
The third MFA goal is that of Collection Stewardship and Access, and this includes just about anything you need to do for and with collections except acquire them.

12:05
We are very open to projects that have multiple components configured in ways that make sense for you.

12:10
One project might consist of cataloging, taking digital photographs, and updating database records, while another might combine digitization activities with rehousing.

12:19
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.

12:35
We encourage a step-by-step progressive approach to collections work, including conservation.

12:41
This means assessing needs, creating a prioritized list of activities, and following through by doing the most important things first.

12:53
Projects should fit within one of these three program goals, but sometimes there is an overlap in the kinds of activities you are proposing, which may make it difficult to select only one program goal.

13:03
We expect the projects aligned with a specific goal will address different problems, use different approaches, and will measure success in achieving the intended results in different ways.

13:12
So how can you choose the best category for your project?

13:15
Here are three things we suggest you try.

13:18
Think carefully about what is in the center of your project.

13:22
Is it the learner?

13:23
Will people who engage with you as a result of your project, let's say to create a new exhibition and related programming, acquire new knowledge, develop a skill, or experience a change in attitude about the subject of your exhibit or just the community that's in the center of your thinking?

13:38
Is your project one that will address an important community need and requires engaging a number of community members or partners?

13:45
And are you going?

13:46
Are you doing it because your museum can help address that need?

13:49
Or is your project about the collections?

13:52
Will your project result in a better managed, better cared for, or more accessible set of objects?

13:59
A second way to go with this might be to think about who you want to review your application.

14:04
If you apply under Lifelong Learning, we will put your application in front of museum educators,

exhibits professionals, interpretive specialists, and professionals with deep experience and understanding how people learn in museum environments.

14:17
Would you rather we put it in front of a combination of experts in civic engagement and social justice, community outreach, and collective impact?

14:24
If that sounds right, then it may push you toward community engagement.

14:28
And if you if you apply under Collection Stewardship and Access, you can be confident that your application will be reviewed by some combination of registrar's, collection managers, curators, conservators, or collections information specialists.

14:40
If that seems appropriate, then this is the most likely your best choice.

14:45
Lastly, a third strategy it to try to make to be to make a list of all the activities you plan to carry out, then assign each to a program goal, and then count to see where most of these activities occur and where most of the time and money will be spent.

15:00
That might well provide your answer.

15:05
MFA supports projects of all sizes, but there's a specific range of funding available in this grant program.

15:12
Your project budget can request a minimum of $5,000 to a maximum of $250,000 in federal funds.

15:19
If you ask for less than $5,000 or more than $250,000 in federal grant funds, your application may be rejected and not reviewed.

15:27
Remember to keep your budget aligned to the scope and scale of your project, including all costs necessary to complete the proposed activities in the MFA grant program.

15:38
All project budgets are required to have at least a one-to-one nonfederal cost share.

15:43
For example, if your total project budget was 300 and was $300,000, you would be able to request $150,000 in federal grant funds and provide a cost share of at least $150,000.

15:57
Cost share can take a number of forms.

15:59
Among them are cash, staff time, volunteer time, third party contributions, grants from foundations, and support from state or local government.

16:09
Cost share cannot come from other federal sources.

16:15
The amount of applications received, and the amount of awards made can vary from year to year.

16:21
Here is a snapshot of our most recent application and award cycle and fiscal year 2024.

16:26
IMLS made 115 MFA awards with a total of $23.3 million in federal funds.

16:33
We received 355 MFA applications last year, resulting in 33% of those applications being funded.

16:41
About 48% of the MFA awards were for project supporting the Lifelong Learning goal, 32% of the project supported the Collection, Stewardship and Access goal, and 20% of the project supported the Community Engagement goal.

16:54
The average amount of federal funds for each project was $203,147.

16:59
On the IMS website, you can use the Search, Award and Grants function to explore our archive of grants that we have awarded in past years.

17:11
All of the 115 MFA awards announced in August are listed here, along with those from prior years.

17:18
You can search this database using a variety of criteria such as institution name, location, and keyword.

17:25
Your search will retrieve basic information about each award, including the amount of federal funds awarded and a brief description of the proposed activities and expected results for each project.

17:40

In this section, we will introduce the components of an MFA grant application and provide an overview about the required, conditionally required, and supporting documents.

17:52
The MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity includes a complete list of the application components.

17:58
Most of these components are created by applicants and saved as a PDF for uploading as part of your application package.

18:04
In Grants.gov, the table of application components lists which application components are required as well as those that are conditionally required.

18:13
For example, some components are included in the application depending on the type of applicant or the type of project.

18:20
Aside from the SF-424S and the IMLS Museum Program Information Form which are completed in the Grand Stack Up workspace, all application components must be submitted as PDF documents.

18:35
These are the required documents.

18:37
All applications must include the documents listed here.

18:40
Omission of even just one might result in your applications rejection.

18:45
Also important to note, there is a 7-page limit for the narrative.

18:48
If you exceed the page limit specified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, we must remove the extra pages before your application goes out to review.

19:00
The second category of application components is that of conditionally required documents.

19:05
Some applications must include 1/2 or even all four of these, and it's your job to figure out which are required for yours.

19:13

If you are applying as a nonprofit, then you must include your Proof of nonprofit Status determination letter issued by the Internal Revenue Service.

19:21
We will not accept a letter of state sales tax exemption as proof of nonprofit status.

19:27
If you are using a federally negotiated indirect cost rate in your budget, then you must include a copy of your final rate agreement.

19:35
If you will create digital products during the course of your project, then you must complete and submit a digital products plan.

19:42
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.

19:53
Omission of even one might result in your application rejection.

19:57
Please note that the term digital product includes digitized and born digital content, resources or assets and software.

20:05
If you are creating any of these types of materials, you must include the form with your application.

20:12
The third group of application components is supporting documents, and here is a partial list of examples.

20:18
Supporting documents are optional.

20:20
You may submit some or none.

20:22
Include only those items that will supplement your proposal.

20:25
This is the place to provide documents that support your project justification, work plan, and intended results that you've already spelled out in your application narrative.

20:33
For example, have you identified a partner whose involvement is key to the project's success?

20:39
If so, a letter of support or commitment would go a long way to reassuring reviewers that they are on board if the project will succeed.

20:46
Pictures can help give reviewers who may not be familiar with your institution, programs, or collections a better idea of what you're describing within your narrative.

20:56
Vendor quotes or equipment specifications show you've done some of the legwork and getting appropriate estimates for project costs.

21:04
We recommend that you be respectful of your reviewers' time and avoid any temptation to include hundreds of pages of extraneous material.

21:11
Being judicious really does work to your benefit, as supporting documents can make or break an application.

21:18
Include what is important, helpful, and directly relevant to your project and stop there.

21:26
In the following sections of this presentation, we will focus on these application components, Narrative and Budget.

21:33
Go to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for complete instructions on how to prepare and complete all of the application components.

21:43
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 Project Results.

21:58
Now let's talk about the Narrative of your proposal.

22:01
You have 7 pages to cover 3 very important issues, and the Notice of Funding Opportunity provides lengthy guidance on what the Narrative should cover.

22:09
First is the Project Justification.

22:12
What need, problem or challenge will your project address and how was it identified?

22:17
Describe how you have used relevant data and other evidence to describe the need, problem or challenge to be addressed.

22:23
Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning?

22:28
Target group refers to those who will be most immediately and positively affected by our project.

22:33
Identify the number of individuals in the target group, or in each target group if you identify more than one.

22:40
Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?

22:43
Beneficiaries refer to those who are likely to be aided in the long term by your project.

22:48
They may or may not be the same as your target group.

22:51
Identify the number of individuals who will benefit from your project in the long term, if reliable and defensible counts are possible.

22:58
Otherwise, describe the characteristics of the beneficiaries you expect to be served eventually by your project.

23:08
In step six of the Notice of Funding Opportunity under peer Review criteria, you will find a list of questions that reviewers are asked to consider when they review your proposal.

23:18
It is a good idea to refer to these as you craft your narrative to be certain you are providing reviewers clear, solid information.

23:26
You will see that they correspond fairly directly with the prompts you are given to write your Narrative.

23:34

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

23:40
The federal government wants its investment to result in something getting better.

23:45
As you define your need, problem, or challenge, articulate what will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible.

23:51
Will someone learn something, develop a skill, change an attitude?

23:56
Will an institutional policy be created to help move your institution forward?

24:00
Will staff receive professional development opportunities?

24:04
Will collections be better cared for?

24:06
Will their lifespan be extended?

24:08
Will access to your collections and the information surrounding them be expanded?

24:12
Identify why it is important that this particular change happens.

24:17
Hone your problem definition carefully in clear, succinct terms, and gather and present data that support your problem definition.

24:29
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.

24:41
You should explain how you will track your progress towards achieving your intended results and what you'll do if you need to course correct.

24:48
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.

24:58
Reviewers will evaluate your proposal on how well your activities are informed by appropriate theory and practice, whether the goals, assumptions and risks clearly stated.

25:08
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.

25:18
They'll also be looking at whether the time, personnel, and financial resources identified are appropriate for the scope and scale of the project.

25:25
They will consider if you've described a clear methodology for tracking your progress and adjusting course when necessary.

25:35
Your work plan will be built on activities, so it's important to be clear about just what an activity is.

25:41
An activity is something that someone does.

25:43
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.

25:50
An activity is not a goal, a result or an outcome.

25:54
Rather it is something you do as part of striving to achieve those.

26:01
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.

26:09
Think of it as answering the question, what if there is no checklist of risks, but every project has them?

26:15
The best proposals will show that you are aware of them and have thought through a plan for dealing with them.

26:21
Look at your activities and think about what could go wrong.

26:24
Focus on the ones where your experience, your own or that of your group tells you yes, that could happen and identify steps you would take in response.

26:33
IMLS knows things go differently than expected, we just want you to prepare by identifying implementable options.

26:40
Here are some examples of risks.

26:43
A project may be dependent upon fundraising to generate the cost share, but it is not complete by the time the application is submitted.

26:50
What will the institution do if that money is not available by the time the project gets under way?

26:55
A project depends on your community partners to achieve success.

26:59
But what if one partner becomes unavailable?

27:01
What do you do now?

27:03
A project involving rehousing collections into a new museum Quality collection storage furniture might run into delays in the delivery of the cabinets.

27:11
What happens to the collection items then?

27:14
How will the institution ensure that they remain safe and secure?

27:20
The third section of your narrative should be devoted to articulating your project's intended results.

27:26
This section is your chance to convince the reviewers that your project will result in something getting better.

27:32

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

27:39
We ask you to tell us what data you will collect and report in order to measure your project's success.

27:45
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.

27:53
And last but not least, we ask that you tell us how you will sustain the benefit of the project.

27:59
How will this improvement that you propose to make continue once your grant is over?

28:06
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've proposed will be realized, will the tangible products you plan to create be accessible to the primary audience who identified, and whether your plan for sustaining the benefits of the project are reasonable and practical.

28:29
We often hear the defining intended results and success measures is challenging for applicants, so it's worth spending a bit of time on this here.

28:38
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.

28:46
If you said someone will learn something, how will you know?

28:50
If your problem related to segments of your community being better able to work together, how will you know when that's been achieved?

28:56
If collections will be better cared for, how will you be sure and how will you measure better?

29:02
If you're digitizing to expand accessibility, how will you know when you've done it?

29:06
All of your results should tie back to your need, problem, or challenge.

29:11

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.

29:21
Reviewers are likely to see that as a disconnect.

29:25
This focus on results and measuring success in meaningful ways is not new.

29:28
There has been a tremendous amount of work done on ways to measure success for you as an applicant, though, we encourage you to consider using a logic model or an outcomes-based evaluation tool to explain your intended results and your plan for achieving them.

29:44
So to recap, your narrative has three sections, Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results, and you have 7 pages for it.

29:54
The sections are all equally important, right?

29:57
Clearly address what we ask you to address and keep an eye on those review criteria.

30:03
We're telling you here exactly what the reviewers will look for, so make it easy for them to find it and understand it.

30:13
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.

30:26
An important component of your application is the budget.

30:29
This is the part of the application where you where you specify all the costs associated with your proposed project.

30:37
The budget consists of two required components, the IMLS Budget Form and the Budget Justification.

30:44
The IMLS Budget Form is a fillable PDF that accommodates up to three years of project activities and expenses.

30:51

The budget should include the project cost that will be charged to grant funds as well as those that will be supported by cost share in kind.

30:59
Contributions to cost share may include the value of services such as donated volunteer or consultant time, or equipment donated to the project between the authorized start and end dates of your project.

31:12
All the items listed, whether supported by grant funds or cost share, must be necessary to accomplish project activities, allowable according to the applicable federal cost principles, auditable, and incurred during the award period of performance.

31:27
The IMLS Budget Form can be downloaded directly from the IMLS website.

31:35
As you develop your budget, keep in mind that there are certain costs that are either allowable or unallowable according to the federal regulations.

31:42
The allowability of a cost item for all federal grants are specified in the Code of Federal Regulation.

31:48
CFR.

31:49
Sometimes referred to as "2 CFR 200" for short, but the full title is "Title 2, Subtitle A Chapter 2, Part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards".

32:04
The Notice of Funding Opportunity includes a partial list of the most common examples of allowable costs.

32:10
This short list of allowable costs are also shown on this slide.

32:15
These costs may be part of what you asked

32:17
IMLS to pay for with federal funds or what you will pay for as part of your cost share.

32:22
The rules about allowability apply equally to grant funds as well as to cost share.

32:28
When completing your project budget, be sure to check that all of the costs you include, whether grant funds or cost share, are allowable.

32:38
There are also some costs which are unallowable according to the federal regulations in 2 CFR 200.

32:44
In the Notice of Funding Opportunity, we also provide an abbreviated list of unallowable costs, which are also listed on this slide.

32:52
Unallowable costs may not be part of what you ask I'm a list to pay for, nor can they be part of what you will pay for as part of your cost share.

32:59
In fact, unallowable expenses can't show up anywhere in your proposal.

33:04
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.

33:14
If after that you have specific questions, please contact us and we'll be happy to help.

33:22
In addition to the IMLS Budget Form, you will also prepare a Budget Justification.

33:27
This is an opportunity to provide, in a more detailed narrative format, an explanation or justification for the project costs.

33:35
The Budget Justification should be written to follow the cost categories in the IMLS Budget Form.

33:40
In the justification, you will identify each expense and show the method of cost computation used to determine each dollar amount, including any that you may have consolidated and summarized on the IMS Budget Form.

33:52
In other words, please show your math.

33:54
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.

34:06
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, which may be shown as a percentage of time, number of days, or number of hours.

34:20
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.

34:29
In the section for 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.

34:38
Detail the number and unit cost for each item and explain how you arrived at the dollar amounts.

34:43
You may also provide vendor quotes or price lists as supporting documents with your application.

34:51
In this final section of our presentation, we offer some application tips and next steps.

35:00
We can only make grants to eligible applicants that submit complete applications, including attachments, on or before the deadline.

35:07
So here are some tips to help you do just that.

35:11
Start the process early.

35:13
By watching this informational video, you're off to a good start.

35:17
Become familiar with Grants.gov's workspace.

35:20
It has many good features, such as the opportunity to collaborate with others in creating your application, as well as a validation process that allows you to correct errors prior to submission.

35:30
Tutorials are also available on grants.gov.

35:34
Be sure your application is complete.

35:36
Check it against the table of application components in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

35:41
Make sure all application components are in the proper format and follow the correct naming conventions.

35:48
Submit your application in Grants.gov well before the deadline so you can correct any errors and avoid any issues created by technology challenges.

35:59
It's important to get your application submitted online through Grants.gov before the deadline.

36:04
IMLS does not accept applications by mail or e-mail.

36:08
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.

36:24
These registrations expire periodically, so do not wait until it's time to hit the submit button to check on them.

36:30
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.

36:39
Both the sam.gov and grant.gov websites have robust help features and FAQs.

36:44
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.

36:56
Failure to have active sam.gov or grant stack of registrations by the application deadline is not an excuse for submitting a late application, so again, start early.

37:09

There are many components that make up the entire application, and the Narrative is an essential and critical part of the package.

37:15
Peer reviewers, museum professionals from all types of museums will be selected by IMLS to read each application and provide constructive comments in the on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed projects.

37:27
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.

37:36
To help make sure your narrative is as clear and complete as possible, revisit the Notice of Funding Opportunity and follow the Narrative outline it provides.

37:45
Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections in your narrative to make it easy for reviewers to read.

37:51
Be sure to consider the review criteria associated with each section of the Narrative.

37:57
Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon.

37:59
The people who will review your application are museum professionals, but they may not be totally familiar with your particular fields.

38:05
Shorthand makes it easy for them to understand what you mean.

38:08
And an advantage to starting your application early is that you can ask a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit.

38:16
Ask them to act like a reviewer who's seeing this for the first time.

38:23
We have also posted the Narrative, Schedule of Completion, and Digital Product Plans from a selection of successful applications from fiscal year 2024.

38:32
To find these examples, go to the sample applications on the IMLS website and scroll down the page to find the Museums for America examples.

38:40
There are an assortment of funded applications listed under each grant program goal.

38:47
Here are a few important dates relating to MFA applications.

38:51
Applications must be received through grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time and November 15th, 2024.

38:58
The date is non-negotiable.

39:00
The time stamp is auto generated by the Grants.gov system and we have no ability to override it.

39:05
We will say this repeatedly to start early and submit your application early.

39:10
That way, if you encounter a difficulty of any kind when submitting your proposal, you'll have some time to resolve the problem and resubmit after the application deadline.

39:19
IMLS staff will review your application for completeness and eligibility, and you will hear from us via e-mail if there are any problems.

39:27
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 MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity.

39:38
IMLS staff will examine your budget, your financials, and your track record with passing current grants.

39:43
We then prepare materials for the Deputy Director for Museums and the IMLS Director.

39:49
By law, the IMLS Director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions, and this typically happens in July.

39:57
In early August 2025, we will notify you by e-mail of the award decisions and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers.

40:05
MFA projects must be scheduled to start on the first day of September 2025.

40:12
And in conclusion, as you read through the NOFO and prepare your application, additional questions may arise before the application deadline.

40:19
We can help you with learning more about the MFA grant program or other grant programs at IMLS.

40:24
Address any specific concerns with the various application components or help you understand the review process.

40:30
You may contact IMS program staff by e-mail or phone.

40:34
Contact information is listed on the Grant Program landing page on the IMS website.

40:39
You may also schedule a counseling call to meet directly with program staff.

40:43
Use the links found on the Grant program landing page to find an available time slot on our calendar.

40:48
You will then receive an e-mail with a calendar invite and a Microsoft Teams meeting link.

40:55
Thank you for listening to our presentation and best of luck to you in preparing and submitting your IMLS grant application.