



# Museums for Digital Learning

An Introduction for Prospective Participants

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Helen Wechsler, and I work in the Office of Museum Services at the Institute of Museum and Library Services. We are delighted you could join us for this webinar about one of our national initiatives, Museums for Digital Learning. [pause] We are recording today's presentation for later access on the IMLS website, which we'll post along with a timed transcript and the presentation slides.

First off, we'd like to share how our system works and how you can ask questions. If you are having technical difficulties, please reach out to our IMLS staff through the "Chat" panel or try leaving and rejoining through the webinar's Zoom link. As the panelists present information about MDL, links to various resources will be dropped in that same "Chat" by IMLS staff.

For this webinar, we have muted all attendees in order to avoid background noise, but please feel free to enter any questions into the Q&A panel. We'll address any questions during the Q&A after the presentation.

## Our Speakers Today

Brooke Gyermek  
Digital Learning Manager, MDL Project Manager  
History Colorado

Helen Wechsler  
Supervisory Senior Museum Program Officer  
Institute of Museum and Library Services

# Introduction

I'm going to provide a brief introduction and then turn it over to Brooke to talk about the function and use of the platform and, hopefully, entice you to dip your toe in.

## What is Museums for Digital Learning (MDL)?

- A platform for sharing your digitized collections and educational supports with K-12 students and teachers.
- Museums of all sizes, types, and locations are welcome!
- Easy, teacher-vetted templates allow you to create dynamic, interactive content called Resource Kits that leverage your digital museum collections.
- Resource kits are searchable by subject and grade, are linked to educational standards, and include activities such as narratives, slide shows, timelines, and games.
- Free to all users, no account required for educators or students.
- Launched in Fall of 2018 as a collaboration of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), Newfields, the Field Museum, and History Colorado.



So, we conceived of MDL back in 2018. IMLS had been funding digitization projects, as well as online educational resources, for individual museums for a long time. I can't even begin to guess the number of objects digitized with IMLS funding – I just know it is enormous. And, the volume of important object-based classroom material being made available to teachers by the nation's museums was also considerable. We also knew that for most museums, their K-12 educator audience is relatively local. We then wondered what it would be like if any teacher anywhere could access content from any museum in the country. We got a few committed museums and a cohort of K-12 educators together to cocreate the templates and functionality that would characterize MDL, guaranteeing that we would meet the needs of teachers and students. The product of that work is what you are about to learn about – a platform with educational Resource Kits contributed by museums across the U.S. for teachers who can search by subject, grade level, and educational standards.

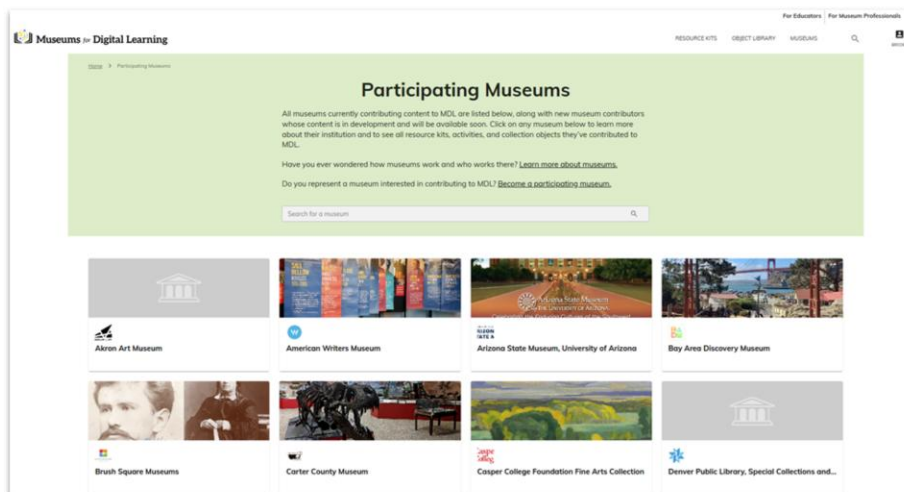
Brooke, I am going to turn it over to you to talk more about the opportunities for museums to become MDL contributors.

# Is your museum ready to participate?

- Existing online digitized collections, preferably with metadata and definitely with all required rights.
- Existing digital educational materials, or the potential to create materials.
- An ability to commit educational and collections staff resources to this project.
- An institutional priority to expand your educational reach nationwide.
- Creation of a Resource Kit.

Museums for Digital Learning - which I will refer to as MDL throughout the rest of this presentation - is a platform made for museums who have existing digitized collection items ranging from art works, to primary historical resources, biological or geological specimens, and other unique objects from your museums collection. The audience is K-12 students, so having existing educational materials or the potential to create educational materials based on field trips or exhibits is ideal. While you do not need to have educators at your organization, you will need staff (we recommend at least 2 staff members) who are able to commit to collections uploading and content creation. It is also essential that there is institutional buy-in for this effort. as well as support from your institution. Once you sign up, museums are expected to create a Resource Kit which you will learn more about throughout this webinar.

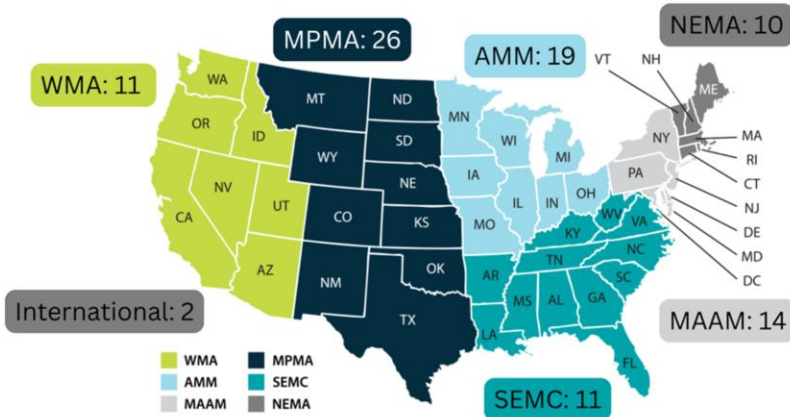
# Who is Participating?



Who is already participating? Viewers are able to see a list of all of our existing museums; museums who have signed up but not yet published content appear at the bottom of the page.

# Who is Participating?

90+ museums from all across the nation (and a few international museums!)



Some examples include:

- American Writers Museum
- Arizona State Museum
- Museum of Chinese in America
- The Museum of Russian Art

We have a total of 93 museums at this time, including two international museums. Nearly all museums types are represented, from house museums to art museums, history museums, botanical gardens, and more.

# Audience

Educators & Students

**Educators** will assess Resource Kits based on:

- Educational standards
- Content
- Student engagement

Then, educators will assign Resource Kits for **students** to engage with *on their own!*

The primary audience for MDL is students across K-12 classrooms! Educators would be the initial viewers, examining each Resource Kit for national educational standards that align with their curriculum, content that is appropriate for their students, and activities for students to engage with. Links for Resource Kits can then be shared directly with student users, via a link or through Google Classroom.



## How to Get Started with MDL

Visit [MuseumsForDigitalLearning.org](https://MuseumsForDigitalLearning.org) and fill out the form to become a participating museum.

**Become a participating museum.**

Would you like to become a participating museum? We are looking for museums of all disciplines to provide collections-based digital educational content for our platform. These materials could include lesson plans, videos, essays, exhibitions, and other online activities that are created using a museum's digital content. Museum professionals and educators will work together to shape the resources to fit museum needs.

Criteria to become an MDL participant include:

- An ability to curate educational and collections staff resources to this project.
- Existing online digital collections, preferably with metadata.
- Existing digital educational materials, or the potential to create materials.
- An institutional priority to expand or diversify your audience.

If you are interested in joining this project, or would like more information, please fill out the form below and one of our team members will get back with you as soon as possible.

Name \*

Title \*

Institution \*

Institution Type (check all that apply)

Art Museum  Science Museum  History Museum  Natural History Museum

Botanical Garden  Zoo/Aquarium  Children's Museum  Other

Email \*

Phone \*

Additional Comments

2025-01-08 10:00 AM EST

Submit

**Museums for Digital Learning**

**MDL Information Sharing Sessions**

Please sign up for at least one session to connect with the MDL team. Questions? Email [info@museumsfordigitallearning.org](mailto:info@museumsfordigitallearning.org)

[brooke.gyrene@state.ec.us](mailto:brooke.gyrene@state.ec.us) [Switch account](#)

🔒 Not shared

\* Indicates required question

Name \*

Your answer

Email \*

Your answer

Organization \*

Your answer

Please choose a time below to join a session, via Google Meet (approximately 30 - 45 minutes).

Sign up for a [virtual information session](#) where a leading content partner will go over the back end of MDL platform.

Login and explore the onboarding articles, tutorial videos, templates, and more.

**Museums for Digital Learning**

**Getting Started**

- Welcome to MDL

**Adding Content**

- Media Overview
- Object Overview

**Resource Kits**

- Resource Kit Overview
- Resources & Templates
- Publishing

**Object Library**

- Object Library Overview
- Object Library Uses

**Help**

- Frequently asked questions
- Contacting support

 **Museums for Digital Learning**

The steps for joining MDL can be done online using the links provided. First you can visit [MuseumsforDigitalLearning.org](https://MuseumsforDigitalLearning.org) and fill out a form to becoming a participating organization. Then, you can sign up for an information session where you will get additional information about the back end of the platform. There are additional resources available that can be explored once you create an account.

1. Visit [MuseumsForDigitalLearning.org](https://MuseumsForDigitalLearning.org) and fill out the form to become a participating museum.
2. Sign up for a [virtual information session](#) where a leading content partner will go over the back end of MDL platform. This is great for those new to the MDL platform as well as those needing a refresher. Information sessions are also a good place to ask questions.
3. Login and explore the onboarding articles, tutorial videos, templates, and more.
4. Email [Info@MuseumsForDigitalLearning.org](mailto:Info@MuseumsForDigitalLearning.org) to ask any questions and connect with the MDL team.
5. **OPTIONAL:** Join a [Content Creation Cohort](#) to get support in creating a new Resource Kit! While our February 2025 Cohort is full, we have some room in our March Cohort and are exploring holding another in May.

# Resources for MDL

## Resource Kit Planning Guide

- Helps you create high quality Resource Kits with engaging educational experiences.
- Works with our Planning Guide Template for note taking and tracking.

## Guidance for Media & Objects

- **Media** includes image, audio or video files OR links from YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, or Sketchfab.
- Metadata from your organization is added to the digital media representations of physical items/works from your museum collection to create **objects**.

## Educator Overview

- Template for quickly communicating with educators.

## Publishing Checklist

- Guidance for publishing your work.

## Informational Sessions & Content Creation Cohorts (offered monthly and seasonally)

- Virtual meetings hosted by MDL staff to support your team.



**Museums for Digital Learning**

Some of the resources available on the platform include:

Resource Kit Planning guide, which gives guidance on 6 tasks that will support your team in creating high quality Resources Kits that will engage students. There is a Planning Guide Template that you can fill in as you work through the 6 tasks.

Videos and additional resources help you to identify the difference between media (uploaded content) and objects (uploaded content with metadata from your collection records).

A template is provided for creating an Educator Overview, which allows you to quickly share the highlights of your Resource Kit with educators who are looking for resources for their classroom.

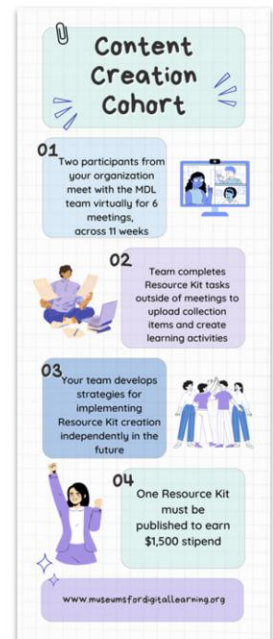
A Publishing Checklist allows you to ensure that your Resource Kit is ready to be published.

If you are in need of additional support, we also offer monthly information sessions which are about 30-45 minutes long and are open for new and existing content contributors. We are also currently hosting seasonal Content Creation Cohorts which include 6 virtual meetings with guided support.

# What is a Content Creation Cohort?

Content Creation Cohorts are virtual meetings led by the MDL team. These meetings support your organization to create your first Resource Kit!

The next cohort starts in **March 2025**.

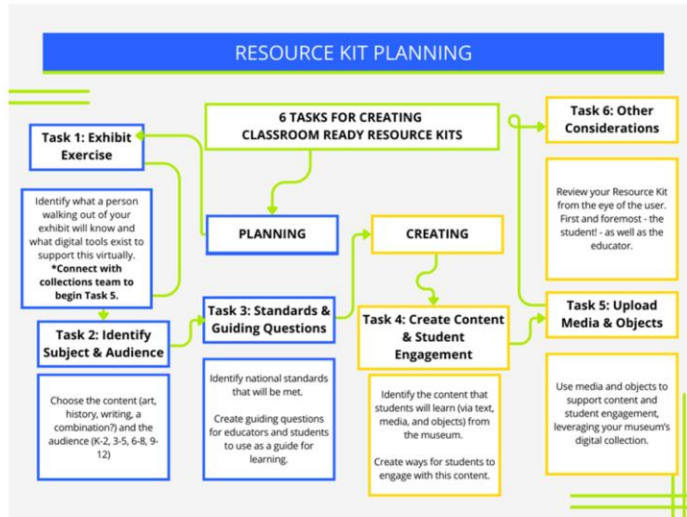


A Content Creation Cohort is a series of virtual meetings with new museum content contributors, hosted by the MDL team.

These 6 virtual meetings across 11 weeks are intended to give additional support for following the 6 tasks for creating Resource Kits.

2 staff members from your organization must participate, and you receive a \$1,500 stipend. This allows your team to develop the skills needed to create Resource Kits independently in the future. Once you join MDL, you are able to sign up to join the upcoming cohorts (there is a limit to 10 museums per cohort).

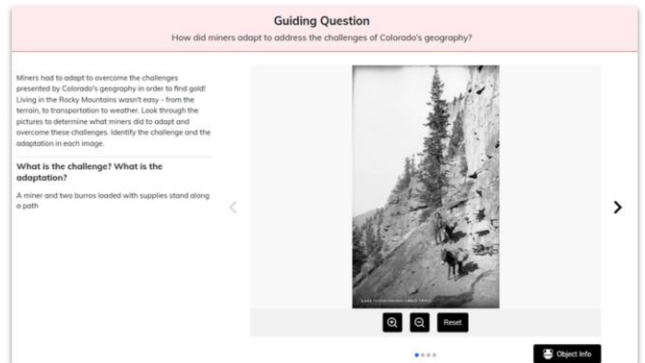
# Resource Kit Planning



The first 3 tasks of the Content Creation Cohort support planning; The Exhibit Exercise allows your team to explore all of the resources already available for your topic, identify which educational subjects are covered and who your Audience will be, and finally, choose national standards and write guiding questions that will be used as the foundation for your Resource Kit.

The last 3 tasks in the Content Creation Cohort focus on the creation of your Resource Kit; starting with creating content and student engagement activities, uploading media and objects and considering other components like audience before publishing your work.

# Resource Kits



To get a better understanding of what a Resource Kit includes, we are going to examine a Resource Kit created by the History Colorado team.

<https://museumsfordigitalllearning.org/resourcekit/266>

First, we would anticipate that educators use the Contents Tab and home screen for the Resource Kit to examine what the whole resource includes. **(Click on Contents)** Each type of activity is indicated with an image, and the title gives additional information. At the bottom of the Contents, educators can see additional resources under Educator Materials as well as the Resource Kit Standards. **(Click on Educator Materials)**. Each Resource Kit must have an Educator Overview. **(open Educator Overview)** This templated document allows museums to quickly share the key components of the Resource Kit, like Guiding Questions and an overview of the activities, which helps educators quickly determine if the resource is right for their classroom.

**(Return to Resource Kit homepage)** Back on the homepage of the Resource Kit, everything is written for the student audience (in this case 6-8th graders). Students explore each activity, navigating from the home screen or by using the arrows within the Resource Kit **(click on first activity, then navigate using arrow)**.

As students work through the Resource Kit, the related Guiding Question appears at the top of the screen. Museums use these questions to create structure in their Resource Kits, and educators use these to check student understanding. Throughout the Resource Kit, students are provided with opportunities to engage with the materials and the Guiding

Questions. An example of this can be seen here (**navigate to Engagement #2: Miner Adaptations**).

In this annotation activity, students are asked to think a little more deeply about miner adaptations to overcome the challenges of Colorado's geography. The students have been presented with all of the information to understand how miners adapted, and are now asked to think about which adaptation they think is the most important. This annotation activity also allows students to download their work to turn in to their teachers.

**(Navigate using arrow to the next activity)** As you can see, the students then move into learning connected with a new Guiding Question. The banner above helps students to see this and also allows educators to plan accordingly. They may ground the activities across multiples days, ask for student check in between Guiding Questions, or bring students together to reflect on Guiding Questions before moving forward.

It is also helpful to include background knowledge activities, reflection opportunities and wrap up questions. **(Navigate to Activity 1)**. This Know - Want to Know - Learn activity, which commonly used by educators - allows students to activate prior knowledge before starting the Resource Kit.

**(Navigate to Reflection activity)** The apples to oranges game gives students an opportunity to sort the images to think about the positive and negative aspects of the topic.

**(Navigate to final activity)** And finally, students are able to return to their Know - Want to Know - Learned activity in the final activity of the Resource Kit.

Utilizing these educational strategies and resources is something that our team at Museums for Digital Learning is able to support you with through the Content Creation Cohorts. If you are unable to participate, there are also a variety of resources and guiding templates on the back end of the MDL.

# The Value of Participation

## Benefits for museums:

- National reach for museum content
- A free home for digital collections
- A place for already created (or new) educational content

## Benefits for K-12 users:

- Access to unique museum collections and primary sources
- Support for national standards
- Engaging variety of resources
- Underrepresented stories



There are significant benefits for both museums and K-12 users.

Your reach will increase as schools across the nation will be able to access your resources. You will be increasing the accessibility of your digital collections as well as creating valuable educational content, and it's all free!

Students and educators get access to unique museum collections that support national standards. They are able to engage in a variety of resources digitally, and our hope is that by recruiting a wide range of museums we will be able to bring more underrepresented stories to the classroom, closing a resource gap that teachers struggle with.

## In Their Own Words (Museum Professionals)

“... we think the platform is wonderful and the possibilities for engagement through different activities are great and unique in the world.”

“We did find the platform very easy to engage ... it was fun to kind of tweak as we went.”

“There's a great diversity of [museums on the site], that's great. [It gets me] thinking about partners teaming up with us.”

“Honestly, I really enjoy the site and find the filters useful, and that's what we know from our data, surveying teachers about our own website: they need those filters.”

Here are some quotes from museum professionals who have been using the MDL platform.



## In Their Own Words (Educators)

"Primary sources are really important to me. MDL is one of the first resources I've seen where it's all compiled in one place. I like what resource kits the objects connect to, that way it doesn't just have the object information, but other bigger picture things that might fit into one of my lessons."

"It's great that [the participating museums are] everywhere. It'll make the connection for kids for them to think, 'Oh I'd actually like to go to a museum.'"

"Teachers get so much push back on resources, even by parents, so if you can see this is funded by the government, that's the gold standard!... If you tell parents, "your tax dollars funded this," that's huge!"

"Wow, this looks like a lot of different activities. Both the variety and number of activities. Typically, with the museums I've used in the past, you get 1 or 2 resources. Some of them are still a burden on the educator to make it a little bit more exciting and interactive. But this is already really cool, like this escape room."

And here are some quotes from some educators who have been using the MDL platform.

## Time for Q & A

[Info@MuseumsforDigitalLearning.org](mailto:Info@MuseumsforDigitalLearning.org)

Thank you, Brooke, for this great introduction, and thank you all for listening in. We have built in time to take your questions – please enter them in the Q&A panel if you haven't already done so and my colleague, Elizabeth, will read them out for us.