



## Museums Empowered

Sample Application ME-251398-OMS-22  
Project Category: Organizational Management

### Denver Museum of Nature and Science

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$211,531
Amount of cost share:	\$221,144

The Denver Museum of Nature and Science will develop a training program for emerging leaders in the museum. Six cohorts of 12 staff members will participate in a 12-week training program led by a newly hired training specialist to develop leadership skills. The curriculum will help participants learn about themselves, their work styles and strengths, and museum operations and initiatives; the goal is to prepare employees for advancement within the museum, the community, and the museum field. Long-term outcomes of the leadership training include strengthened leadership capacity; increased employee engagement; and progress in succession planning through growing diverse future leaders. This project will develop a tested leadership training model for museum professionals and strengthen the museum's organizational culture.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the current Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

## 1. PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

**A. Museums Empowered goal and category addressed.** The Denver Museum of Nature & Science is embarking on the development of a Museum-wide leadership competency and training system in order to address our highest organizational management priorities. This professional development system will benefit staff at all levels, developing Museum-specific core competencies, building leadership capacity within those competencies across the organization, and increasing employee engagement. Within this larger framework, we are requesting an IMLS Museums Empowered grant in order to pilot and iterate upon a new emerging leaders program, called Growth Opportunities for Leadership Development (GOLD). This project addresses the Museums Empowered Organizational Management goal of strengthening and supporting museum staff as the essential part of a resilient organizational culture. Specifically, the proposed project meets Objective 4.2 to develop programs that address the specific learning and growth opportunities identified by staff needs assessments.

**B. How the project advances the Museum's strategic plan.** The Museum's *Everyone, Everywhere* strategic plan is guiding the institution's growth through eight key initiatives. These initiatives will connect more and diverse people to nature and science in ways that are meaningful to them, either at our building, out in the community, or virtually. Within this strategic plan, the proposed professional development project advances the Equity Initiative. Underpinning all of the other projects, this initiative is focused on dismantling the exploitative legacy of museums so that all staff thrive, all guests feel welcome, and marginalized perspectives are valued and represented in the Museum's programs and exhibitions. The current stage of this work focuses on diversity, equity, access and inclusion (DEAI) among staff; the proposed project builds equitable opportunities for staff from diverse backgrounds to gain leadership skills to advance professionally. This project sets up our staff for leading the organization through the current strategic plan, and lays the foundation for future diverse leaders responsible for ensuring the ongoing relevance and success of the Museum.

The proposed project also addresses two of the Museum's 2022 institutional priorities, which were informed by a biennial employee engagement survey. The first priority is to invest in staff through training and employee development, and the second priority addressed is to continue to advance and infuse DEAI into operations, with a focus on personal growth and action as one way to achieve this.

**C. Need, problem, or challenge addressed.** The Museum is committed to investing in staff at all levels, but there is not currently a framework for training or consistency on professional development expectations or skills across the Museum. While some individual staff members are enabled to participate in professional development, this ability varies depending on who one's manager is and what department they work in. Furthermore, the historic practice of sending staff members out to external trainings is not cost effective. By bringing more critical training in-house we can make it more cost effective as well as more tailored to the Museum's unique needs, thus improving overall effectiveness while also contributing to a sense of belonging and organizational culture.

This lack in consistent or formalized professional development for staff is recognized as a problem by the Museum's leadership, and also by the majority of staff members. The Human Resources department leads the implementation of an employee engagement survey for all staff every other year to gain their input on all facets of their experience as staff at DMNS, including, among other categories, job satisfaction, manager effectiveness, teamwork, trust, overall wellness, diversity and inclusion, and the extent to which staff believe this survey leads to positive changes being implemented. The 2021 employee engagement survey, which had an 86% participation rate, found the Museum ranking lower than desired on several items related to employee development. For instance, the item "the museum makes investments to make me more successful" received a 56% favorable response, which was 6.6% lower than when the survey was conducted in 2018. For the item "the leaders of the museum value people as their most important resource," a 58% favorable response was received, which was also 6.6% down from 2018. The item "my department provides professional development/training opportunities for me to further develop my knowledge, skills, and abilities," received a 53% favorable response (6.5% down from 2018).

Responses to items related to job satisfaction similarly show room for improvement related to leadership potential, in terms of knowing one's strengths and goals and finding ways that your job can align with these. The item, "My job allows me to utilize my strengths," received a 69% favorable response (4.9% down from 2018). "This job is in alignment with my career goals" received a 66% favorable response (down 3.2% from 2018).

Many of the Museum's current leaders will leave the workforce in the next ten years, highlighting the urgent need to begin to develop bench strength in future leaders who will be responsible for the sustained success of the organization. Additionally, as we strive for the Museum to be a place where people launch from, by creating opportunities to grow people into leaders in the museum field, it is important that more staff have meaningful opportunities for growth within their jobs, regardless of their title.

Other supporting data for this project is a recently completed leadership trait survey in which staff were asked to identify the leadership traits most important to them. Sixty-five percent of those completing the survey do not currently supervise staff (and would be the target audience of the proposed project). Key traits most frequently identified in this survey included effective listening and communication; ability to guide, develop and motivate others; integrity, honesty, and professionalism; cultural sensitivity; emotional intelligence; ability to see alternatives; transparency/accountability; ability to work across organizational boundaries; and empathy, fairness, and compassion.

In order to address these needs, the Museum is developing a leadership competency framework focused on competencies for leading self, leading others, and leading organization projects, initiatives and departments. The Museum has begun to draft a framework for leadership success as the first step in developing a leadership competency system throughout the organization that will serve as a helpful starting point (Attachment A). What is needed now is dedicated resources and staff time to tailor the competencies to meet staff expectations for leadership, then develop a DMNS-specific training system that touches staff at all levels. A dedicated staff person on this project will provide the missing bandwidth and skill set within the Human Resources team to lead this work, including piloting and refining the new emerging leaders program.

We plan to hire a training specialist in January 2022 (supported by resources outside of this grant request and cost share) who will lead this work for a period of four years. Within this larger framework that includes training for all staff, management training for new supervisors, and advanced training for senior or seasoned leaders, we are requesting IMLS funds to support the implementation of a new emerging leaders professional development program, Growth Opportunities for Leadership Development, or GOLD, focused on helping diverse staff members to grow and advance within the competencies identified as most important to the Museum community.

**D. Target group.** This project will target current Museum staff across all departments who do not hold leadership titles (all who are not supervisors, managers, directors, or vice presidents).

**E. Beneficiaries.** The entire Museum community stands to benefit from this project. Non-management staff will receive valuable professional development that can advance their careers, whether at the Museum or by making them more attractive candidates in other institutions. All staff benefit from more effective management as these staff members might advance into supervisory roles. Every facet of the Museum culture benefits from a staff that feels supported, invested in, and valued. Cultivating new leaders from a diversity of backgrounds provides an opportunity to bring a variety of voices and experiences to light. New leaders can help to guide the Museum and other organizations towards a more equitable future. Finally, the project can benefit the museum field by offering a tested model and framework for professional development that can be adopted by other museums or similar organizations.

## 2. PROJECT WORK PLAN

**A. Activities.** Planning work for the GOLD program would begin prior to the start of the grant period as part of the overall leadership framework development work to be carried out. The GOLD program will be iteratively implemented, assessed, and improved for at least a three-year term within the larger four-year plan the Museum is committed to.

This professional development program will enable emerging leaders (those not currently in management or director roles) to learn more about themselves, their work style and strengths, and museum operations and initiatives. It is designed to support transitioning from an individual contributor to leader and to grow leaders, with or without a title. The program will prepare employees for advancement within the Museum, the community, and the museum field.

The GOLD program will draw from existing frameworks initially, and will be further developed by the Training Specialist in the period leading up to the grant start date. It will also be further customized and iterated upon based on ongoing evaluation in order to address training needs specific to DMNS and improve the program's effectiveness. Examples of leadership programs with components the DMNS plan will draw upon include Leaders on the Rise (StandUpTeam.org), Leadership Denver (Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce), Leadership Arts (Colorado Business Community for the Arts), Women of Influence and Impact Leadership Program (Women's Chamber of Commerce), and the Emerging Leaders Program (City of Arvada). The Informal STEM Learning Professional Competency Framework developed by the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) will also be a useful planning tool.

The program will serve up to 12 staff members per cohort, two cohorts per year, for a total of 72 staff members impacted over a three-year grant period.

#### Sequence of Activities:

##### **Pre-Grant:**

1. Planning and Development. The Training Specialist will be hired in January/February 2022. During this time while the specialist is setting a foundation for the overall leadership framework, they will also begin planning for the GOLD program. They will conduct an audit of previous employee assessments to identify the core leadership competencies this program will focus on. While some competencies have been identified already, we anticipate that the specialist's expertise and deep dive into data on employee perceptions will help to refine these focus areas. They will research and identify external training providers as well as internal experts; supplemental online trainings, books, podcasts, and articles; and other resources.
2. Awareness and Recruitment. Working with the Director of Human Resources and other key stakeholders, the Training Specialist will communicate widely about the new program (including through department meetings and all staff meetings) to raise awareness and recruit applicants. They will work with the directors of every Museum department to familiarize them with the benefits and intent of the program and to help recruit candidates from their teams.
3. Initial Application. The Training Specialist will assemble a selection committee, which will be comprised of a manager and a director from various Museum departments, an HR representative, and a representative from the existing Living our Values team (focused on DEAI issues). Applicants will need to complete an application, including a letter of recommendation from their direct supervisor supporting their participation in the program. For the fall cohort, applications will be due each August with selections made by the first of September.

##### **Grant Period:**

4. The program will kick off each September and February and last for 12 weeks. At the beginning of the program, a strengths assessment (such as Emergenetics or Strength Finder) completed by each participant will help the program to hone in on their unique goals, obstacles, and needs to grow into a stronger leader. Also at the start of each cohort, the Training Specialist will conduct a 360 evaluation with each participating staff member which will include a self-evaluation as well as consults with the staff member's supervisor and two other colleagues.
5. Participating staff members will engage in 6 full-day meetings (once every two weeks) plus work outside of the program days, adding up to a total of approximately 48 hours of participation per person. While many core competencies have already been identified, these will be further refined and modified

by the Training Specialist following their analysis of the organization’s current needs. Initial competencies include: understanding DEAI, individual strengths and workstyles, self-advocacy, Museum operations and initiatives, strategic thinking, interpersonal relationships, presentation and facilitation skills, critical thinking and problem solving, project management, agility/growth mindset, and community collaboration, all in the context of their role in advancing the mission, vision and values of the Museum. Most sessions will bring in outside training providers with expertise in key competencies, and other sessions may be facilitated by our own staff. Providers could include the Rocky Mountain States Employers Council and Stand Up (creators of Leaders on the Rise). Final choices for providers will depend on the competencies identified as the focus of the program and further research carried out by the Training Specialist.

The self-paced project work will include select individual online trainings such as those available through the Museum’s current learning management systems, KnowBe4 and ThinkHR, and other resources including books, articles, and podcasts identified by the Training Specialist that align with the competencies covered by the in-person session. This work will also include the opportunity to job shadow a member of the leadership team.

### Sample Project Calendar

September 14, 2022	Session 1: Kickoff & Individual Strengths and Workstyles
September 28, 2022	Session 2: Presentation & Facilitation Skills
October 12, 2022	Session 3: Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
October 26, 2022	Session 4: Interpersonal Relationships
November 9, 2022	Session 5: Understanding Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion
November 30, 2022	Session 6: Project Management & Community Collaboration
December 7, 2022	Graduation Celebration
January 4, 2023	Applications Due for Cohort 2

6. The program will culminate in a graduation event such as a celebratory dinner.
7. At the end of the program the Training Specialist will lead a post-program 360 evaluation with each participating staff member. This evaluation will assess the growth of each individual over the course of their participation in the program and how they have put their learnings into practice.
8. A Research Analyst from the Museum’s Community Research & Collaboration department will lead a focus group with each cohort at the end of their time in the program to gauge effectiveness of the program. They will analyze and summarize the findings for the Training Specialist and the Project Director.
9. For the spring cohort, applications will be due each January with selections made by the first of February.
10. Evaluation findings will be assessed and utilized to inform the planning of future cohorts. The summer months, in particular, offer a longer break between cohorts to assess and make changes. Updates will occasionally be shared with managers, directors, and senior leadership.

**B. Risks.** Staff turnover is always a risk to the efficacy of professional development to increase institutional capacity. However, this project’s goal of strengthening organizational culture is still met in part simply by making the investment in the individuals. If individual staff members step into leadership roles outside of the

Museum as a result of the skills they learned through this program, we will still consider it a success. Indeed, we fully anticipate that graduates of the GOLD program will find leadership roles in other organizations, which is still a win for these museum professionals and for the organizations they might join in the future.

**C. Who will plan, implement, and manage the project.**

Roles and time commitments of all personnel are further described in the Budget Justification.

The Museum's Director of Human Resources, Nicole Lucero-Holub, will serve as the Project Director. She is also a co-leader of the Museum's Equity Initiative, playing a major role in the Museum's work to apply the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion to its organizational practices and policies. She has advocated for and spearheaded a number of human resources practices and policies that foster greater diversity and inclusion. She will hire and supervise the to-be-hired Training Specialist.

The Training Specialist will have a minimum of three years' experience developing, analyzing, and measuring instructional training programs with a special focus in adult education. Highly desired qualifications will include demonstrated experience designing effective leadership development programs at all levels from emerging leaders to executives, experience with Learning Management Systems, and experience working in Human Resources. Job description is attached.

A Research Analyst from the Museum's Community Research & Collaboration (CRC) department will be responsible for carrying out the evaluation plan described below. As of time of application, this position is vacant and is posted to be hired by the end of 2021. As core members of the CRC team, Research Analysts are assigned to projects throughout the Museum and are responsible for the full cycle of evaluation. They are tasked with using research and evaluation strategies to measure outcomes and impact of current and future Museum exhibitions, programs, activities, and services to visitors, potential visitors, and the greater community. This new hire will hold a Bachelor's Degree or equivalent work experience in social science, museum studies, education, nonprofit management, or related field and will have at least two years' experience conducting quantitative and qualitative social science research and/or evaluation. The job description is attached.

Finally, two other directors will work closely with the project, although their time is not included in the Museum's cost share. Tina Martinez, Director of Experiences and Partnerships, and Stephanie Wood, Director of Guest Services, will be ambassadors of the program, will support awareness and recruiting, provide context for and support the participation of employees in other than full time roles, and act as liaisons to other departments as the program is developed. Both Martinez and Wood oversee departments with large numbers of non-supervisor staff, and their teams are among the most diverse across the Museum. In addition to being a seasoned manager and leader, prior to joining DMNS, Martinez was responsible for organizing professional development for out-of-school time staff across Denver and an annual regional conference on youth development with Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Wood is also an experienced leader, having managed large teams her entire career in museums. She brings to the project a background in organizational culture through the lens of customer service. She is a key player in the Museum's new hire orientation and one of the primary stakeholders in developing an experience promise statement for the institution.

**D. How team structure supports engagement of all.** Led by the Human Resources department, the GOLD application process will be open to all staff and supported by directors in all areas of the Museum.

**E. Resources.** The project cost of \$511,344 includes \$249,992 requested from IMLS and \$261,352 of non-federal cost share. IMLS funds would support half of the to-be-hired Training Specialist position, with the other half supported by other Museum resources as cost share. IMLS funds would also support a portion of the professional services for outside vendors or groups to provide specific professional development sessions. The Museum offers as cost share the remaining portion needed for professional services, and the time commitments of the Project Director and Research Analyst. It is important to note that the Museum has committed to funding the larger, four-year leadership framework development project. We are committed to incurring pre-award costs as well as costs required during the program that are not counted as cost share, including fees for individualized strength assessment tools for participants, a modest amount for materials and supplies, pay for participants who are non-exempt and are participating outside of typical work hours, and the time commitments of other Museum

staff. If this IMLS grant is not awarded the Museum will identify other funding sources to ensure this full scope of work is carried out.

**F. Tracking progress.** The PD will maintain regular communication with the Training Specialist throughout the project to discuss program changes as they are recommended and check in on progress toward our intended results. The PD will occasionally report on progress to the Museum's Senior Leadership Team because this work to enhance employee engagement is a top institutional priority and impacts all departments. A business support specialist will monitor expenses in real time, and the quarterly billing cycle managed by the Finance department provides another opportunity to compare budget to actuals.

### **3. PROJECT RESULTS**

**A. Intended results.** This three-year project will result in a tested leadership training model for museum professionals that addresses the gaps and needs identified in recent staff assessments and builds valuable professional competencies for diverse emerging leaders. Because we will evaluate the program following each cohort in order to continuously improve the program, we see potential ways to grow this model by, for instance, creating a manager track in the future, thereby contributing to a leadership training system that directly touches even more Museum staff members. This project stands to benefit the individual staff members who participate by helping to advance them in satisfying and engaging museum careers, and also benefits society as a whole by further strengthening museums through the power of a thriving organizational culture. Long-term outcomes of the leadership training framework are: 1) Strengthened leadership capacity across the organization; 2) Increased employee engagement across the organization; and 3) Progress in succession planning through growing diverse future leaders.

**B. Changes in knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes.** As a result of this new training program, participating Museum staff will demonstrate improvements across the competencies identified as focus areas and report greater engagement in their work at the Museum. They will feel more supported in their professional development and more valued as the Museum's most important assets. They will feel a greater sense of purpose and job satisfaction as they develop core leadership competencies to lead wherever they are, and they will be able to see how their work in their current role can set them up for being able to obtain leadership roles in the museum field.

#### How outcomes will be measured:

1. The Training Specialist will conduct pre- and post-program 360 evaluations with each participant. In this evaluation, the participant self-evaluates their strengths with respect to the competencies, and their direct supervisor and two other colleagues will be asked to comment on the same. This evaluation will assess the growth of each individual over the course of their participation in the program and how they have put their learnings into practice. Due to the confidential nature of the individual data gathered through this process, the Training Specialist will synthesize and aggregate the data and extract general themes in order to measure and report to IMLS on the extent to which the program supported the development of leadership competencies.
2. The Research Analyst will lead a program evaluation. Each cohort of 12 will participate in a focus group led by the Research Analyst at the end of their time in the program. The Research Analyst will formulate questions to pose to the group that tie back to the employee engagement survey questions cited above (the Museum invests in my growth; provides adequate professional development opportunities; my job allows me to use my strengths; my job is aligned with my career goals), questions developed in collaboration with the Training Specialist tailored to other key evaluation questions, and questions that elicit responses on what can be improved for the next cohort. The Research Analyst will analyze and summarize findings and share them back with the Training Specialist and Project Director. Results will be used to inform the content and structure of future cohorts.
3. Finally, the Museum-wide employee engagement survey will offer an additional layer of evaluation. Planned to be administered again in spring 2023 and 2025, this survey will measure improvements in the specific items this project is intended to address. While this tool surveys all staff, we will disaggregate data

on the staff members who have participated in the GOLD program. We hope that as a result of the GOLD program we will see a progressive improvement in the statements noted in the Evaluation Plan table below:

Intermediate Outcomes	Measurement
Participating Museum staff demonstrate improvement across the leadership competencies	360 evaluation summary
Participating Museum staff report greater engagement with their work	Focus groups
Participating Museum staff report feeling supported and prepared for leadership roles	Focus groups
Participating Museum staff report greater sense of purpose and job satisfaction	Focus groups
Participating Museum staff feedback will be used to refine the program	Focus groups
Longer Term Outcomes	Measurement
Increased overall employee engagement around training, growth opportunities, and job satisfaction as measured by increased favorable responses to the following questions on the employee engagement survey:	
The Museum makes investments to make me more successful	Employee Engagement Survey: Greater than 56% favorable in 2023, higher in 2025
The leaders of the Museum value people as their most important resource	Greater than 58% favorable in 2023, higher in 2025
My department provides professional development/training opportunities for me to further develop my knowledge, skills, and abilities	Greater than 53% favorable in 2023, higher in 2025
My job allows me to utilize my strengths	Greater than 69% favorable in 2023, higher in 2025
This job is in alignment with my career goals	Greater than 66% favorable in 2023, higher in 2025
Museum-Wide Outcomes	
Progress in succession planning through building diverse future leaders	
Improved leadership competencies across the organization	

**C. Tangible products.** The staff development model developed and iterated on throughout this grant period will be a tangible product that could be of interest to replicate at other cultural institutions.

**D. How benefit of the project will be sustained.** The Museum is fully committed to the development of a museum-wide leadership competency framework. The IMLS-supported strand, the GOLD program, will similarly be operationalized and borne as an ongoing Museum expense if it proves to be an effective model.

**SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION**

CALENDAR YEAR	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	Pre-Grant	2022		2023				2024				2025		
		Jan-Aug 2022	SEP	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
<b>Pre-Award Planning and Development</b>															
	Plan for overall framework and the GOLD emerging leaders program	PD, Training Specialist													
	Raise awareness and recruit applicants	Training Specialist, HR, Directors													
	Hold initial round of applications and make selections	Training Specialist, Selection Committee													
<b>Program Implementation</b>															
	Accept applications and make selections	Training Specialist, Selection Committee													
	GOLD Cohort 1	Training Specialist													
	GOLD Cohort 2	Training Specialist													
	GOLD Cohort 3	Training Specialist													
	GOLD Cohort 4	Training Specialist													
	GOLD Cohort 5	Training Specialist													
	GOLD Cohort 6	Training Specialist													
<b>Oversight, Administration, and Project Evaluation</b>															
	Hire Training Specialist	PD													
	Conduct pre-program 360 evaluations	Training Specialist													
	Conduct post-program 360 evaluations	Training Specialist													
	Conduct Focus group, analyze findings, and share report	Research Analyst													