



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-255536-OMS-24
Project Category: Institutional Capacity
Project Type: Large Project (\$25,001-\$75,000)

Underground Railroad Education Center

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$33,453
Amount of cost share:	\$33,454

The Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region will develop a Museum Studies Teen Program for junior and high school students. The organization will offer a comprehensive out-of-school program to prepare students from low-income and/or marginalized backgrounds for a career in the museum field. Staff will hire a full-time Program Manager, initiate partnerships for mentorship, develop curriculum with input from external consultants, and recruit program participants. The project will result in a ready-to-implement plan that can be shared with other small museums wishing to replicate the program at their institutions. The project will increase organizational capacity, engage community youth, and help diversify the museum workforce, benefiting student participants and the museum field as a whole.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Performance Measurement Plan

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

**Narrative (5 pages) Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc.
IMLS Grant – Inspire! Grant for Small Museums (FY24)**

The URHPCR is requesting a one-year grant of \$33,453, with a match of \$33,454, to fund the planning of an innovative and comprehensive two year/one summer out of school program in Museum Studies for junior and senior high school students. The Museum Studies Teen Program is an exciting, engaging, pro-active way to advance the democratization of the museum field by preparing teens to pursue a career in a museum field and/or for enrollment in an undergraduate Museum Studies program. It will tap into the talents and strengths evidenced by our teens, help them understand the relationship between these abilities and their application in the museum field, and empower them to step forward with confidence into the multi-faceted world of museums, from financier to administrator to curator to interpreter to preservationist and beyond.

Project Justification

Which program goal/project category and associated objective(s) will your project address?

This planning project will address the goal of building the capacity of small museums to provide museum services to their communities and the objective of supporting the development of institutional plans for small museums. The goal and objective will be addressed by developing a comprehensive Museum Studies preparation program for low-income African American teens, and teens from other marginalized communities. The program as implemented at URHPCR will increase the capacity to engage community youth in the museum world, and by virtue of the replication component of the program plan, will support institutional planning for a more diverse future museum world.

How will your project advance your museum’s strategic plan?

Key to advancing URHPCR’s mission is the Young Abolitionist Leadership Institute (YALI). YALI is a successful and long-running summer and after-school program that engages teens in the life and operations of the URHPCR and its surrounding community. One component of the strategic plan is to expand teen programming in ways that continue to leverage existing URHPCR resources and operations and encourage teens to become agents of change. The proposed Museum Studies Teen Program will focus on immersing teens in the world of museum going, museum work and careers, and museum transformation. This program will expand the extensive and well-established programming the URHPCR already provides for teenagers in the community.

The strategic plan includes the cultivation and strengthening of strategic relationships with other organizations. This Museum Studies Teen Program planning project will include a critical work-based mentoring component involving professionals from other museums, a recruitment and selection process involving local high schools and other local organizations, and the involvement and input of colleges that have undergraduate Museum Studies programs. Relationships with other museums, local and out of area, will also be cultivated and strengthened as URHPCR pursues the replication component of the Museum Studies Teen Program.

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

There is a persistent overall shortage of quality out-of-school time (OST) programming for low-income students from marginalized communities.¹ In addition, the Museum Studies Teen Program would be categorized as a “specialty program” based on a Rand report on OST programs, because it will develop interest and skills in a particular topic area (as opposed to academic-focused programs). The report noted that youth access to such enrichment activities is highly dependent on family income². The Museum Studies Program will address the overall shortage of OST programming for marginalized youth as well as the shortage of specialized enrichment programs for students from families that cannot afford it.

The program will also address the oft-cited need to democratize museums and diversify museum staff.³ Museum staff are overwhelmingly white, heterosexual, and able-bodied, and museum leaders are overwhelmingly male. For centuries museums have told stories about a diversity of people, presenting these stories from the perspective of those in power. As such, museums have bolstered white supremacy, sexism, colonialism, ableism, and heteronormativity. When we democratize storytelling in museums, we help produce a more equitable distribution of power in our society⁴. Our youth are our future museumgoers, museum staff and museum leaders. To ‘democratize storytelling’ in museums, our teens, especially our teens from marginalized communities, must become engaged, active participants in the transformation of our museums. To this end, the proposed Museum Studies Teen Program curriculum will inspire and empower teens to become agents of change in the museum world.

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

The junior and senior high school students who will participate each year will be most immediately affected by this project: the planning of a comprehensive museum studies preparation program. Approximately 20 high school juniors will participate in the program when it is first implemented in fall 2025 and will continue in the program through an intensive summer immersion component, and through their senior year. During the program planning year (2024-25), a focus group of four teens will assist the planning team in various ways with the development of the program plan.

An important component of the curriculum, and therefore this planning project, is the work-based mentoring of teens by professional museum staff. As such, the administration and staff of participating museums are also an important target group. Partnering with the administration and staff of other museums will expand and heighten awareness of precisely the problems the curriculum is designed to address and provide opportunities for them to actively engage in transforming the museum world. As part of this project, URHPCR will formalize a plan for inviting an extensive list of museums to mentor participating teens, and for involving participant museums in designing the mentoring component.

Another component of this project is to design a process by which the completed and documented curriculum can be shared with other museums within and outside the Capital Region, with the goal of replicating the Museum Studies Teen Program in as many museums as possible. Adoption of the curriculum by other institutions will expand the target group of junior and senior high school students as agents of change in the museum world.

Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?

Future cohorts of teens attending this comprehensive museum studies preparation program at URHPCR and other museums are ultimate beneficiaries. Undergraduate college programs in Museum Studies will benefit from the awareness, skills and experience that graduates of this teen program will bring to their college level museum studies. The museums that choose to implement the Museum Studies Program can benefit from applying the diversity goals of the program to their policies and institutional planning, and finally, the museum going public ultimately will benefit from a more diverse group of museum professionals that is focused on the equity-driven transformation of museum hierarchies, collections, curation, interpretations, and audience interaction.

Project Work Plan

What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?

Staffing, Establishing Outcomes, and Creating a Detailed Workplan/Timeline

At the outset of the project year, a full-time Program Manager will be hired to oversee the program when it is implemented. This position will be filled at the start of the planning year so the Program Manager can be extensively involved in all aspects of program development during the grant year. The planning team will determine the desired outcomes for the program and target groups, which will be used to guide the development of the various program components. The specified outcomes and other factors will be used to expand the Schedule of Completion into a more detailed workplan and timeline for the project year.

Partnerships

Once the Program Manager is on board, partnerships will be initiated and cultivated throughout the project year as URHPCR solicits input, expertise, feedback, mentors and other forms of involvement from teens, college Museum Studies programs, sources of program participants, museums, and other stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Curriculum Planning and Scheduled Consultant Feedback

Curriculum planning will constitute the heart of program development activity. It will take place throughout most of the project year; however, efforts will be made to complete an outline of the curriculum within the first several months of the project year since other activities will be informed by curriculum content. Input from qualified external sources will be solicited to ensure the curriculum is age appropriate, comprehensive, flexible, that it provides a foundation for entering a college level Museum Studies Program, and that it adheres to current best practices for promoting participants' social and emotional learning (SEL).

Mentor Program Planning

Development of the mentor program will begin after curriculum planning starts and continue parallel to it. Every program participant will be partnered with a professional mentor in the museum field with whom they will develop and

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implement a work project. Therefore, extensive administrative and partnership planning will be necessary to develop this component, including soliciting commitment from staff in many and varied types of museums, developing a framework for type and frequency of mentor/mentee interaction, and goal setting/results measurement. As this will be a two year/one summer program, actual pairing of mentors with teens will occur after the program begins so that teens have time to identify their interests and preferred type of work project. Planning during the grant year will include the process for matching teens with mentors. Information on best practices, and input and feedback from outside experts will be sought to ensure quality mentor program design.

Grantseeking and Other Fundraising

Fundraising planning will begin January 2025 and continue throughout the project planning year with the purpose of identifying sources of funding to implement and sustain the proposed program, which will be in addition to implementation funding commitments already in place.

Facilities Planning

Multiple potential venues in which to conduct various components of the program will be identified and explored. This activity can begin toward the middle of the planning year and continue throughout the year as progress in curriculum and mentor program planning clarifies facility needs. Final facilities decisions and arrangements will be made toward the end of the project year.

Recruitment and Retention Planning

Recruitment planning activities will include but not be limited to establishing criteria for program participation, determining sources of potential participants, coordinating recruitment efforts with those organizations, and involving in the effort teens already participating in URHPCR programs. Recruitment planning will start mid-project year and will end prior to summer 2025, when actual recruitment will begin for the fall 2025 program start. Recruitment planning will include the development of a marketing plan and materials to promote the program, and in-person presentations to potential participants. A retention process will be designed to ensure participants are meeting their own and program interim goals, and to provide vehicles for them to share any problems or concerns as they arise. Retention planning will include designing a tool to establish and enforce protocols for attendance, behavior, and other program-related obligations.

Program Evaluation and Post-program Follow Up

Evaluation tools will be designed to monitor the impact of the program when it is implemented, assess whether outcomes were met, and inform changes to the program. Evaluation planning will occur late in the project year, when plans for other program components are complete or near completion. As part of the Post-program experience Museum Studies Teen Program ‘graduates’ will be asked to provide post-program contact information so that URHPCR can measure outcomes such as enrollment in undergraduate Museum Studies Programs and related academic pursuits. In addition, the URHPCR will design and offer post-program follow up opportunities, such as social gatherings for program graduates, follow-up contact with mentors, and meetings to share their experiences with new program recruits and participants.

Replication

A process will be designed by which the completed and documented curriculum, as well as URHPCR’s implementation experience, can be shared with other small museums within and outside the Capital Region, with the goal of replicating the Museum Studies Teen Program in as many institutions as possible.

What are the risks to the project and how will you mitigate them?

As evidenced by the scope of the planning activities described above and given that the first day of program attendance in fall 2025 represents a ‘hard’ deadline for completion of all planning activities, the stability of planning team membership and time contributions is important to project success. To mitigate the potential impact of instability, URHPCR will establish communication and meeting protocols to ensure that all planning team members are kept informed of activities and progress in all areas. This will create a foundation of knowledge so that loss, temporary absence, or change of planning team members, including the program manager, would not cause a standstill in any planning area.

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Successful and timely development of the Museum Studies Teen Program depends on the buy-in, commitment and follow-through of many external partners. To mitigate the risk of not gaining, or not retaining this support, URHPCR will cultivate and nourish partnerships by focusing on how a successful Museum Studies Teen Program can benefit them and their organizations, not only on how they can help us. An example would be showing partners associated with undergraduate Museum Studies programs how our program will create a pipeline of prepared students for their program, and potential mentors from other museums will be encouraged to think of real projects they need completed so that contributing their time to our program is cost beneficial to them.

Who will plan, implement and manage your project?

This planning project will be implemented by a planning team of seven people that bring to the table a variety of experiences and expertise. Three of the seven are the URHPCR Co-Executive Directors Mary Liz Stewart (MS) and Paul Stewart (MA), and the URHPCR Deputy Director Marcus Kwame Anderson (BA). Mary Liz Stewart will also serve as the overall Project Director. The Program Manager hired at the start of the grant year will serve on the planning team and manage the program when it starts in fall 2025. Also on the planning team is an experienced youth program facilitator and CEO of her own company (Ethel Walker), a retired administrator from the NYS Education Department with experience in public school finance (Andrea Hyary, PhD), and a professor of Sociology at Hudson Valley Community College (Catherine Willis, PhD). In addition to the planning team, three individuals have agreed to serve as consultants to the planning team: a lecturer in Africana Studies at SUNY Albany (Jennifer Burns, PhD), the Rensselaer County and Troy (NY) City Historian and Director of Hart-Cluett Museum (Kathryn T. Sheehan, BA/MA Candidate), and the Director of the Museum Studies Program at the Rochester Institute of Technology (Juilee Decker, PhD). A focus group of four teens currently involved with URHPCR will work with the planning team in various capacities.

What time, financial, personnel and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?

The \$33,453 in IMLS funds requested for the development of the Museum Studies Teen Program will primarily support the salary of the full time Program Manager that will be hired at the start of the grant year. The IMLS grant will also support modest compensation for the other six members of the planning team and the consultants. It is likely that planning team members (other than the Program Manager) will contribute substantial time in excess of the 36 hours per year per member allotted in the budget, as needed, to complete a quality program plan on time. All have agreed to volunteer their service as needed for time beyond the compensated 36 hours so as to ensure the development of a high-quality program. The grant will fund a small amount of travel for meeting with potential and committed partners.

How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?

Guided by the detailed work plan, timelines and milestones established at the start of the project year, the Project Director will oversee progress toward end results in each of the activity areas listed above. Protocols will be established so that all team members are aware of tasks and progress in all activity areas; in this way, team members' responsibilities can be adjusted temporarily if additional resources are needed to keep an activity on track for completion.

Project Results

What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem or challenge you have identified?

This one-year project will result in an out of school time (OST) Museum Studies program plan that when implemented in fall 2025, will be an empowering and formative experience for participating teens: formative in terms of their personal development, and formative in terms of the attachment and long-term commitment to the museum world they will forge. The availability of the curriculum and implementation plan, and the program when implemented, will address the shortage of quality OST enrichment programming for students from marginalized communities. The URHPCR program materials will facilitate replication, thus increasing over time the number of teens impacted. Program graduates will constitute a pipeline of youth inspired and prepared to contribute to the democratization and diversification of the museum landscape.

How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the target group change as a result of your project?

Participating teens will develop an appreciation for museums and their role in society, critical thinking skills necessary to effective museum going, and an understanding of why and how museums need to change. They will learn what museum staff do and be aware of the variety of museum-related career paths. They will be prepared to participate in an

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undergraduate Museum Studies program or seek museum-related employment. In addition to acquiring knowledge and skills, participating teens will have a transformational growth experience. A study of 264 recent and older alumni of long-running museum teen programs documented the profound and lasting impact these programs had on the participants⁵. These are some of the changes documented by this study and/or mentioned by the participating alumni which the URHPCR target group will undergo: emerging self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment, self-assurance, a lasting belief in their own potential, the ability to set goals, and a sense of belonging in museums.

What products will result from your project?

URHPCR will produce a ready-to-implement Museum Studies Teen Program plan. The program plan will include detailed documentation for the following components: Curriculum, Mentoring Program, Recruitment, Retention, Program Evaluation and Follow Up, Facilities and Marketing. In addition, URHPCR will cultivate numerous partnerships with individuals and institutions as part of the planning process; these partnerships will be nurtured and sustained for the ongoing benefit of the URHPCR Museum Studies Teen Program, URHPCR in general, and the museum community at large.

How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance?

The benefit of this project will be sustained by implementing the Museum Studies Teen Program in fall 2025 and beyond. To this end, complementing already committed implementation funding, additional funding opportunities will be pursued on an ongoing basis so as to meet the financial needs of this project. URHPCR administrators involved in this project are responsible for the success of other long-running teen programs; the experience they bring to bear in all aspects of OST programming will contribute to the sustainability of this program. The Program Manager hired at the beginning of the planning year will be intimately involved in the development of all aspects of the program. This person's knowledge of the program, and their sense of ownership and commitment fostered during the planning year will contribute to the success of the first year of the program, which will be critical to long term sustainability.

1. America After 3:00 PM: Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks. Afterschool Alliance, 2020; The State of After-school Programs. EdWeek Research Center, 2022.
2. The Value of Out of School Time Programs. Rand Corporation, 2017.
3. See Statement of Values in Tools and Approaches for Transforming Museum Experience. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 2021.
4. Refocusing Museums on People: My Dreams for Museums in a Post-Covid World. Isabel Singer, Art Museum Teaching Forum, 2021
5. Room to Rise: The Lasting Impact of Intensive Teen Programs in Art Museums. Whitney Museum of American Art, 2015.

Performance Measurement Plan (2 pages) Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc.

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Effectiveness

The Project Director, in collaboration with the Planning Team members and Program Manager, will develop a detailed work plan outlining timelines and milestones. Milestones include posting for, interviewing and hiring a Program Manager; targets for writing curriculum and receiving feedback by target dates; developing the mentorship program and receiving feedback by target dates; reaching out to and receiving buy-in from local museums who wish to be involved as program mentors and partners. Effectiveness will be tracked on the basis of timelines and milestones being met. A bi-weekly verbal and written evaluation of goal-focused accomplishments will be conducted with each activity work group.

Efficiency

Having recruited highly motivated team members to develop the multiple components of the Museum Studies Teen Program, their work will likely exceed the compensation offered. A system of project time tracking will be maintained for planning team members, teen advisors, and consultants and reviewed weekly by the Project Director. Hours contributed over and above the planned compensated hours will be logged as volunteer hours.

Quality

To ensure quality control, discussions and review of planning component products, such as the mentorship plan or the recruitment plan, will be conducted on a monthly basis with designated consultants. Local museum professionals and partners will also be invited to provide feedback so as to ensure the development of a relevant and high-quality program.

Timeliness

Achievement of project-based tasks will be evaluated on a bi-weekly basis through conversation and product production. Timeline and tasks will be adjusted, if necessary, to ensure completion of all activities per the Detailed Workplan / Timeline.

Schedule of Completion - Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc.	2024 Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	2025 Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.
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Hire & Onboard Program Manager												
Establish Desired Outcomes for Program & Target Groups												
Create Detailed Workplan / Timeline												
Initiate and Cultivate Partnerships												
Curriculum Planning, Including Consultant Feedback												
Mentor Program Planning												
Grantseeking and Other Fundraising												
Facilities Planning												
Design Recruitment Plan												
Design Marketing Plan for Recruitment												
Design Retention Plan												
Design Program Evaluation Tools & Plan Post-Program Follow-up												
Design Replication Plan												