



Museums Grants for African American History and Culture Grant Program

Applicant Information Session



Introduction



Video Chapters

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Using This Video

Watch

Watch this video in its entirety

Review

Review the AAHC Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) at www.imls.gov/grants

Refer

Refer to this video as needed



What is AAHC?

Museum Grants for
African American History and Culture

AAHC = Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Created by an act of Congress in 2003 which authorized:

- The Smithsonian to create a National Museum of African American History and Culture, and
- IMLS to create a grant program to improve operations, care collections, and development of professional management at African American museums.



Rosa Parks Museum



National Jazz Museum in Harlem



AAHC is for...

- Museums *whose primary purpose, as reflected in its mission, is African American life, art, history, and/or culture*, and 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 the application deadline
 - ✓ Own or use tangible objects
- Museums may be stand-alone organizations, or they may be part of a larger institution, such as a college, university, Tribe, or a state or local government.



AAHC is also for...

- A public or private nonprofit agency that is responsible for the operation of a museum that meets the AAHC eligibility criteria, applying on behalf of the museum.
- A museum service organization or association whose primary purpose, as reflected in their mission, is African American life, art, history, and/or culture.
- A historically black college or university (HBCU), as defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965, whether the college or university has a museum or not.
- Native American tribal organizations may apply if they otherwise meet the eligibility requirements.



What Can AAHC Fund?

AAHC Funds Projects

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



National Blues Museum

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



AAHC Project Goals

1. *Build the capacity* of African American museums and their ability to serve their communities.
2. Support the *growth and development of museum professionals* at African American museums.

AAHC Building Capacity

Goal 1: Build the capacity of African American museums and their ability to serve their communities.

- Objective 1.1: Develop, enhance, or expand public programs, exhibitions, and/or school programs.
- Objective 1.2: Enhance museum operations and professional management.
- Objective 1.3: Improve and expand access to collections.
- Objective 1.4: Foster partnerships and collaborations among museums and institutions of higher education, particularly HBCUs.



Indiana University South Bend

AAHC Professional Development

Goal 2: Support the growth and development of museum professionals at African American museums.

- Objective 2.1: Develop and implement internship, fellowship, and mentoring programs structured to support emerging professionals entering the museum field.
- Objective 2.2: Develop and implement equitable and inclusive staff recruitment and retention programs.
- Objective 2.3: Create learning and growth opportunities designed to build skills, enhance knowledge, and provide opportunities to share expertise.



Freedom Rides Museum

Choosing a Project Goal



Building Capacity



Emerging Museum
Professional
Development

Having a hard time choosing? Try these:

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

What Size Are AAHC Projects?

AAHC Projects are categorized in 2 sizes – Small and Large



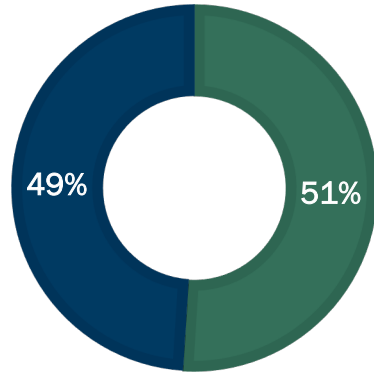
Small Projects: \$5,000 - \$100,000 in federal grant funds with **no cost share** required.

Large Projects: \$100,001 - \$500,000 in federal grant funds with **1:1 cost share** required.

How Many AAHC Projects Get Funded?

AAHC AWARDS FY24

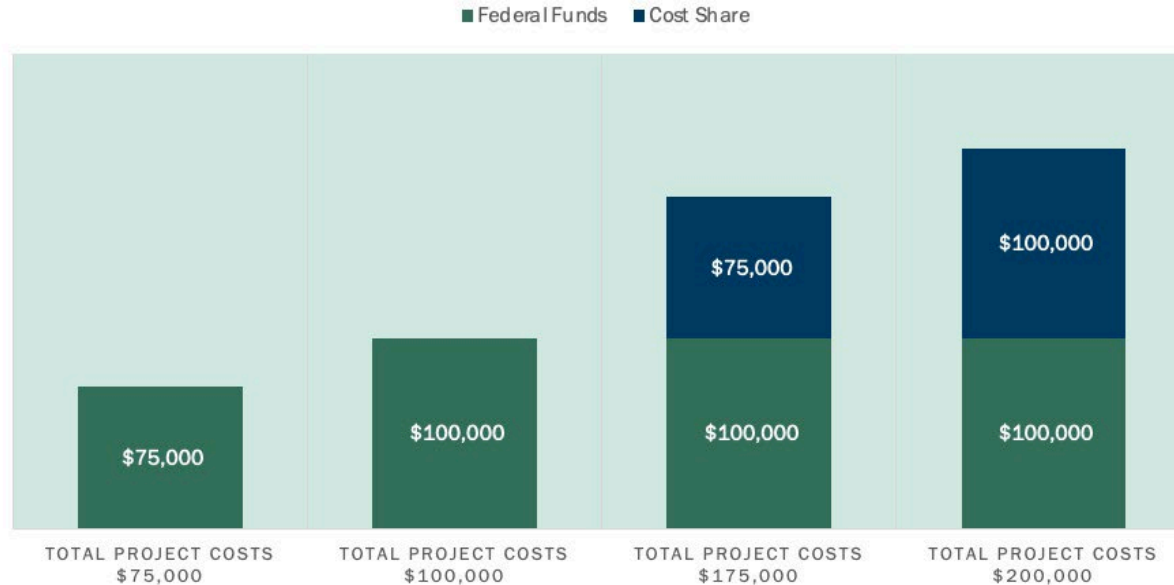
- Large Projects (\$100,001 - \$500,000)
- Small Projects (\$5,000 - \$100,000)



In FY24 IMLS made 30 AAHC awards for a total of \$6M.

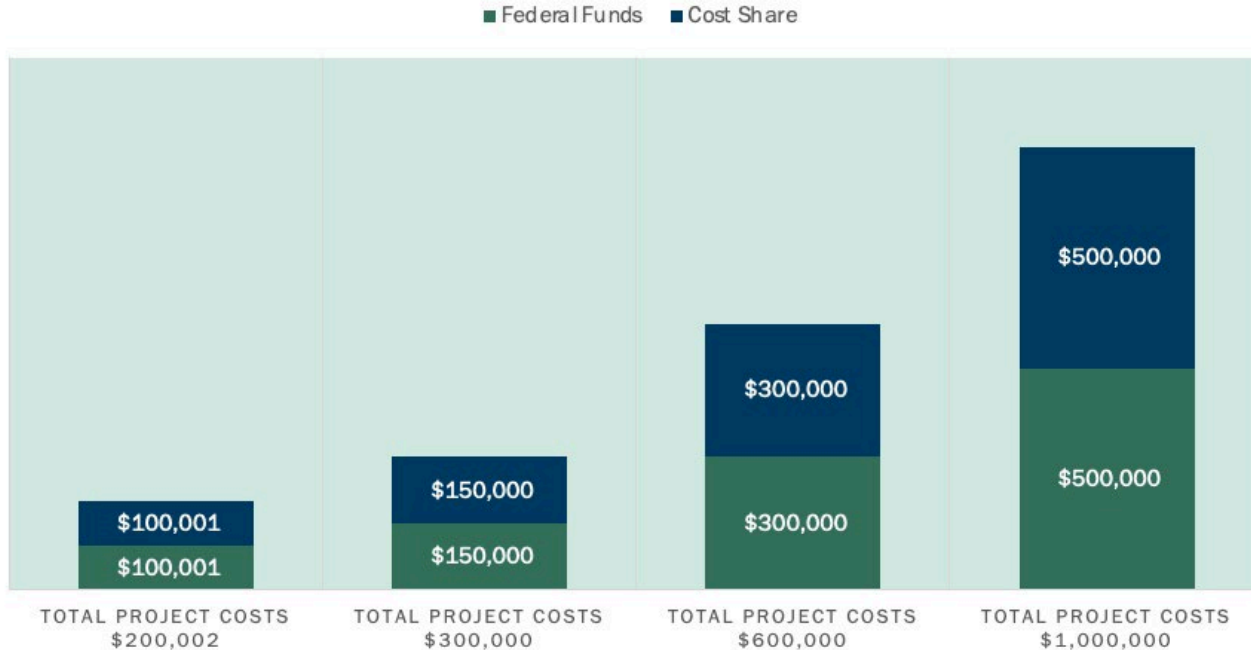
AAHC Funding Levels Small Projects

SMALL PROJECTS WITH LESS THAN 1:1 COST SHARE



AAHC Funding Levels Large Projects

LARGE PROJECTS WITH 1:1 COST SHARE





Application Components

Overview



Application Components

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

Most of these components are created and saved as a PDF for uploading as part of your application package in Grants.gov.



Required Documents

These components are required of all AAHC applications.

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



Conditionally Required Documents

These components are required of some AAHC applications.

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



Supporting Documents

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

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

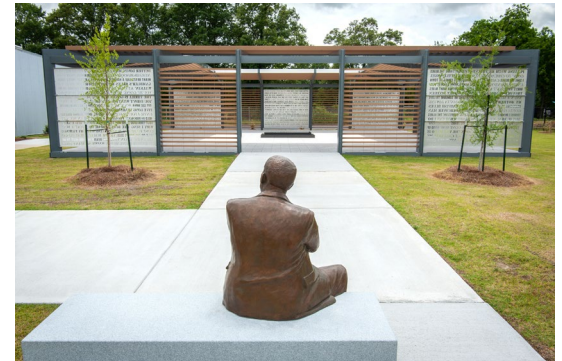
Additional Application Components

In the following section of this presentation, we will focus on the **Narrative**.

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



National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center



B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center



Application Components

Narrative



Narrative: Project Justification

Tell us:

- Which program goal and associated objective of Museum Grants for African American History and Culture will your project address?
- What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?
- Who is the primary audience for your project and how have they been involved in the planning?
- Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?

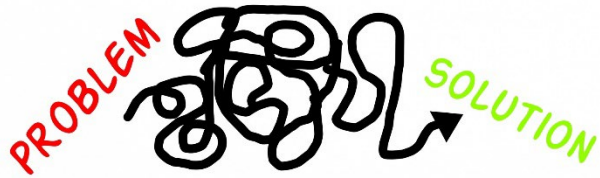


Narrative: Project Justification Continued

Reviewers will look for:

- How well does the proposal align with the selected Museum Grants for African American History and Culture program goal and objective(s)?
- How well has the applicant used relevant data and best practices to describe the need, problem, or challenge to be addressed?
- Has the applicant appropriately defined the primary audience(s) and beneficiaries, as applicable, for this work?
- Have the primary audience and other project stakeholders been involved appropriately in planning the project?
- If applicable, are the collections and/or records that are the focus of the project and their current condition described and quantified in enough detail?

Defining a Need, Problem, or Challenge



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



Narrative: Project Work Plan

Tell us:

- What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?
- What are the risks to the project and how will you mitigate them?
- Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?
- What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?
- **Note:** You must include \$3,000 per year in award funds for travel to attend IMLS-designated meetings.
- How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?



Narrative: Project Work Plan Continued

Reviewers will look for:

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

Defining an Activity



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



Defining Risks

About Risk

- There is no checklist of risks, but every project has them.
- The best proposals will show that the applicant is aware of them and has a plan for dealing with them.
- Answer the question, “What if?”

Examples of Risk

- A project is dependent upon fundraising to generate cost share, but it might not be complete by the time the application is submitted. What will the institution do if the money is unavailable by the time the project starts?
- A project may be structured around university interns, who will be selected and trained according to well thought-out processes. What will happen if one or more interns drops out? What’s the plan for replacing them mid-project?
- A project involving rehousing collections into new museum-quality collections storage furniture might run into delays in preparing the space or in the delivery of the cabinets. What happens to the collection items then? How will the institution ensure that they remain safe and secure?
- A project depends on your community partners to achieve success, but one partner drops out mid-project. What do you do now?



Narrative: Project Results

Tell us:

- What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified? Be sure to address this question from the dual perspectives of advancing knowledge and understanding and ensuring that the federal investment made through this grant generates benefits to society.
- How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the primary audience change as a result of your project?
- What products will result from your project?
- How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance?
- If applicable, how will the care, condition, management, access to, or use of the museum collections and/or records that are the focus of your project improve?



Narrative: Project Results Continued

Reviewers will look for:

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

Defining Intended Results, Success Measures



- Answer the question, “What will be better as the result of this work?”
- Think through how you’ll recognize success and how you’ll measure it for each of your high-level activities.
- Tie everything back to your need, problem, or challenge.
- Include tangential benefits or positive outcomes, but make sure they are in addition to, not instead of, your original intended results.



Narrative Recap

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



Characteristics of Successful Applications

- *Institutional Impact:* The project builds the capacity of a museum and/or supports the growth and development of museum professionals at African American museums and/or HBCUs
- *In depth Knowledge:* Applications reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.
- *Project-based Design:* Work plans consist of a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge identified in your application.
- *Demonstrable Results:* Projects generate measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.



Application Tips and Next Steps

Awarded Grants Search

The screenshot displays the 'Awarded Grants Search' interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with 'About', 'Grants', 'Our Work', 'Data', and 'News'. Below the navigation is a search bar with the text 'Search by Keywords...'. The main content area shows a search for 'Museum Grants for African American History and Culture' for the fiscal year 'FY 2022'. On the left, there are filter sections for 'Fiscal Year' (with 'FY 2022' selected), 'Funding Office' (with 'Office of Library Services' selected), and 'State'. A 'SUBMIT' button is at the top of the filters, and a 'CLEAR ALL FILTERS' button is below it. The search results are displayed in a table format, with a 'Table' icon and a 'DOWNLOAD THE DATA' link. The table has 8 columns: Log Number, Institution, Fiscal Year, Program, Federal Funds, Funding Office, City, and State. The results show 4 grants for the year 2022.

Log Number	Institution	Fiscal Year	Program	Federal Funds	Funding Office	City	State
MH-251595-OMS-22	Association of African American Museums	2022	Museum Grants for African American History and Culture	\$50,000	Office of Museum Services	Washington	DC
MH-252116-OMS-22	Jefferson School African American Heritage Center	2022	Museum Grants for African American History and Culture	\$109,893	Office of Museum Services	Charlottesville	VA
MH-251932-OMS-22	Morgan State University (Lillie Carroll Jackson Civil Rights Museum)	2022	Museum Grants for African American History and Culture	\$249,999	Office of Museum Services	Baltimore	MD
MH-252017-OMS-22	Mosaic Templars Cultural Center	2022	Museum Grants for African American History and Culture	\$250,000	Office of Museum Services	Little Rock	AR

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

Sample Applications

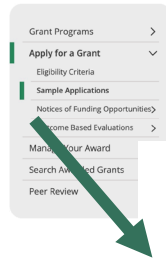


About **Grants** Our Work Data News



Home > Grants > Apply for a Grant > Sample Applications

Sample Applications



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Lifelong Learning

- Iroquois Indian Museum (PDF, 940KB)
- Muncie Children's Museum (PDF, 399KB)
- Museum of Craft and Design (PDF, 455KB)

Institutional Capacity

- SEE Science Center (PDF, 335KB)

Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

- African American Museum of Iowa (PDF, 270KB)
- Association of African American Museums (PDF, 287KB)
- Elizabeth City State University (PDF, 268KB)
- Museum of the African Diaspora (PDF, 397KB)
- National Jazz Museum in Harlem (PDF, 375KB)
- Whitney Plantation (PDF, 261KB)

- Sample applications of recently funded grants are available on the IMLS website.



Application Tips

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

- Start early.
- Become familiar with Grants.gov Workspace. See: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>
- Do your background research.
- Be sure your application is complete.
- Make sure all application components are in the proper format and follow the correct naming conventions.
- Submit to Grants.gov **early** so you can correct any errors.

Application Tips Continued

Check your registrations and know your usernames and passwords.



System for Award Management (www.sam.gov)

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

Grants.gov (www.grants.gov)

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



START EARLY, DON'T DELAY



Additional Application Tips

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

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

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

<https://www.imls.gov/grants/become-reviewer/museum>



Important Dates and Times

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

- Awards will be announced in **June 2025.**
- Projects must start **July 1, 2025.**



Next Steps

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

- AAHC grant program
- Application Components
- Review Process

<https://www.ims.gov/grants/available/museum-grants-african-american-history-and-culture>

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