



Museums Grants for African American History and Culture Grant Program

Applicant Information Session

FY25 Video

August 2024

Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Office of Museum Services informational video for the “Museums Grants for African American History and Culture Grant Program Applicant Information Session”.



Introduction

The goal of this video is to provide an overview of our Museums Grants for African American History and Culture grant program – which we call "AAHC" for short - and the process of preparing an application for funding.



Video Chapters

- 1 **Chapter 1:** What is Museums Grants for African American History and Culture (AAHC)?
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This video is organized into six chapters:

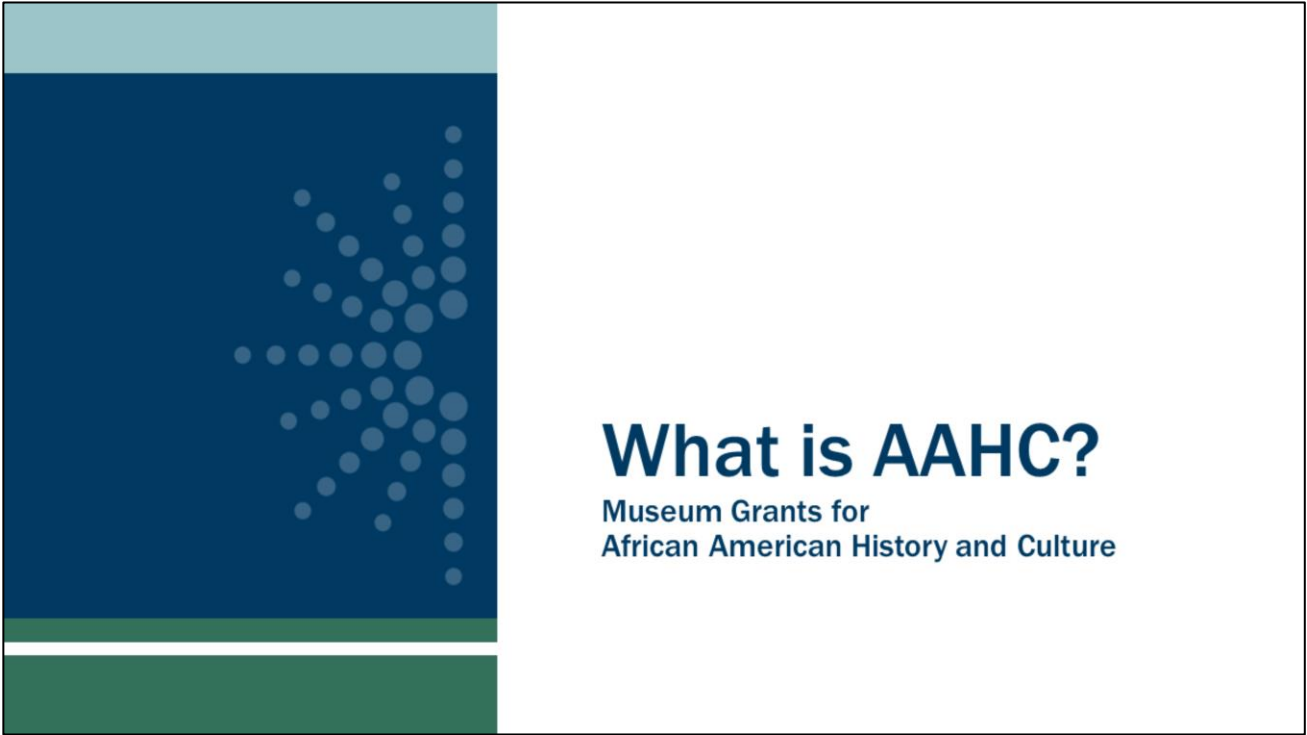
- What is Museums Grants for African American History and Culture? This section explains the purpose and design of the AAHC grant program.
- What can AAHC Grants Fund? This section explains the types of projects that can be funded in AAHC and the amount of funds that can be requested.
- Application Components – Introduction. This section describes the types of documents that are needed to create an AAHC grant application.
- Application Components – Narrative. This section provides guidance on composing the narrative part of the application.
- Application Tips and Next Steps. The concluding section provides a few tips and next steps.

The complete set of instructions for how to prepare and submit an AAHC grant application are found in the Notice of Funding Opportunity published on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and also available on the IMLS website. Please refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the most detailed information to prepare your application.

Using This Video



- To get the most out of this video, we recommend that you watch it in its entirety.
- This will give you an understanding of the AAHC grant program, the types of projects that can be funded, and the necessary application components.
- You may also want to review the AAHC Notice of Funding Opportunity before, during and after you watch the video.
- Notices of Funding Opportunities, also known as NOFOs, are documents that detail the requirements of each of our grant programs. All of our NOFOs can be found at imls.gov/grants
- As you navigate the application process, you can use this video as a reference tool.
- If you'd like to skip to a specific section, please use the time bar below, or the links in the description box, to navigate the chapters.



In this section we will answer the question “What is AAHC?” providing information on the purpose and intent of this grant program and who it is designed to serve.

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

The same legislation that created the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, also directed IMLS to create a grant program. This program is designed to:

- build the capacity of African American museums;
- nurture the growth and development of museum professionals at African American museums; and,
- increase access to museum and archival collections at African American museums and Historically Black and Colleges Universities, also known as HBCUs.



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 a grant program for museums whose primary purpose, as reflected in its mission, is African American life, art, history, and/or culture.

To apply for federal funding at IMLS, all applicants must meet certain requirements.

- Your organization must be located in one of the United States' 50 States, its Territories, or the District of Columbia.
- Your organization must be a unit of State, local, or tribal government, or a private nonprofit organization with tax-exempt status.

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

To be eligible for funding as a museum your organization 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.
- And own or use tangible objects.

Your museum may also be a stand-alone organization, 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.

You could also qualify as a not-for-profit museum service organization or association whose primary purpose, as reflected in its mission, is to support African American museums.

HBCUs are eligible to apply whether they have a museum, or museum studies program, or not.



What Can AAHC Fund?

In this section we will answer the question “What can AAHC Fund?” providing details on the types of projects and associated goals within the AAHC grant program as well as offer some summary data on the number and type of AAHC projects that were funded last year.

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 grants are designed to support project-based activities so let's take time to consider exactly what that means. The Project Management Institute defines a project as, "A temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result." They go on further to explain that a project is temporary because 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 rather a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

We recommend that you keep this definition in mind as you conceptualize your IMLS project. Think of it as a temporary non-routine set of activities, which collectively have a beginning and an end in time, a defined scope requiring specific resources, and which are designed to accomplish a specific, singular goal.

The slide features a dark blue header with a white starburst icon on the left. The main content area is white with a vertical bar on the left side, divided into three colored segments: dark green at the top, light blue in the middle, and dark blue at the bottom. The text is presented in a clear, sans-serif font.

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.

With that concept of “project” in mind, let’s turn to project goals. The type of project activity you are seeking to fund should align with one of these. As you can see here, there are two options: Building Capacity and Professional Development.

Why is your decision about which project goal to choose so important? For one thing, your application will be reviewed by museum professionals who have experience and expertise in these general categories. And for another, your application will be competing against others who have chosen the same category. In short, the entire review process incorporates an assumption that your project aligns with the goal you’ve identified. So, it’s an important choice.

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

So let's take a look at what kinds of project activities might fit within these goal areas. The listed objectives provide some of the types of projects that fit within the Goal.

Projects designed to build the capacity of African American museums may involve increasing the number of museum professionals working at African American museums to enable the museum to expand educational programs, engage the community, enhance professional management, or provide for improved care of collections.

Some examples of the kinds of project activities that you may apply for are:

- Exhibition development, design, and fabrication.
- Interpretive and educational programs, product development, and delivery.
- Developing collection plans, interpretive plans, or strategic plans using consultants, researchers, and other sources of professional expertise.
- Implementing recommendations or action plans from planning activities.
- Cataloging, inventorying, documenting, and registering collections.
- Digitization of collections designed to enhance outreach, expand access, or improve collections management.

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

Projects designed to address Goal 2, supporting the **growth and development of museum professionals at African American museums**, may involve developing and implementing internship, fellowship, and mentoring programs to support emerging professionals entering the museum field. They can involve developing equitable and inclusive staff recruitment and retention programs, as well as creating growth opportunities for staff to build skills, enhance their knowledge, and share expertise.

Some examples of the kinds of project activities that you may apply for are:

- Working with consultants and training providers to develop and offer workshops and training for museum staff, leadership, and volunteers.
- Creating and supporting PAID internships and fellowships, including recruitment, supervision, mentoring, and training for interns and fellows.
- Providing professional development and career growth opportunities for museum staff, leadership, and volunteers.

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?

Before we close our discussion of project goals, we want to again mention our guidance for projects that could belong logically in more than one. Sometimes it’s tough to choose, and you might be tempted to think that the best strategy would be to align with both! We advise against that for several reasons.

We expect that projects aligned with a specific goal will address different problems, use different approaches, and will measure success in achieving the intended results in different ways. So how can you choose the best category for your project?

Here are three things we suggest you try. **Think carefully about what is “in the center” of your project.** Is it the visitor? Will people who engage with you as a result of your project - let's say to create a new exhibition and related programming - acquire new knowledge, develop a skill, or experience a change in attitude about the subject of your exhibit? Or is it the museum staff that’s in the center of your thinking? Or is your project about preparing the next generation of the museum workforce?

A second consideration might be to think about **who you want to review your application.** If you apply under Building Capacity, we will put your application in front of museum educators, exhibits professionals, interpretive specialists and professionals with deep experience in understanding what is needed for a museum to reach its full performance level and be successful.

Would you rather we put it in front of a combination of experts who specialize in

developing and executing a wide range of museum training? If that sounds “right,” then it may push you toward Professional Development.

A third option is to list the activities you plan to carry out and think about the project budget. To which category are the majority of project time and resources allocated? Again, our most important advice is to choose one project goal and write your proposal accordingly. As always, if you have questions, contact the IMLS staff to discuss them.

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.

Our next topic has to do with how much funding your project requires. The size of your project, and how much you are requesting in IMLS funds, will determine the cost share requirement. There are two options to consider.

For **small projects** requesting an amount of federal funds less than \$100,000, you do not need to provide a cost share. This option is designed for smaller scale projects.

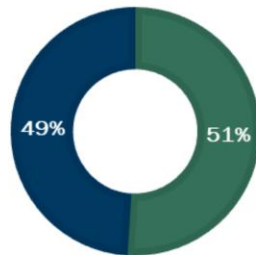
For **larger projects** that are requesting an amount of federal funds greater than \$100,001 (and up to a maximum of \$500,000) you must provide a 1:1 cost share.

Cost share can take a number of forms—among them are cash, staff time, volunteer time, third-party contributions, grants from foundations, and support from state or local government. Cost share cannot come from other federal sources.

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.

The amount of applications received and the amount of awards made can vary from year to year. Here is a snapshot of our most recent application and award cycle.

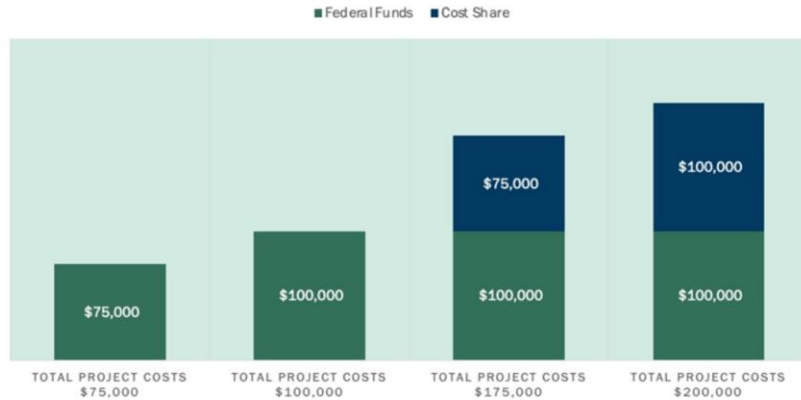
In FY24 IMLS made 30 AAHC awards with a total of \$6 million in federal funds. We received 61 eligible AAHC applications last year, resulting in 49% of those applications being funded.

About 51% of the AAHC awards were for Large projects, with the remaining 49% being Small projects.

The average amount of federal funds for each project was \$171,429.

AAHC Funding Levels Small Projects

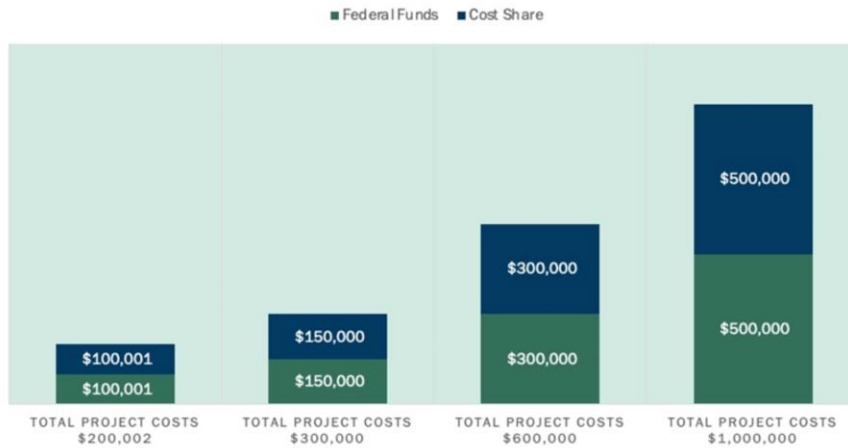
SMALL PROJECTS WITH LESS THAN 1:1 COST SHARE



Here you will see different ways that cost share could be applied to a funding request of \$100,000 or less. While cost share is not required at this funding level, you may elect to identify cost share anyway and it does not have to be 1:1. Please note that it is not advised to commit to a cost share larger than your IMLS funding request and it will not be seen as a competitive edge over the other applications.

AAHC Funding Levels Large Projects

LARGE PROJECTS WITH 1:1 COST SHARE



Here you will see the 1:1 cost share applied for projects requesting \$100,001 to \$500,000. For these projects, the 1:1 cost share is required. Again, it is not advised that you over commit to a cost share larger than your grant request.



Application Components

Overview

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



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.

The AAHC Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) includes a complete list of all the application components. Most of these components are created by applicants and saved as a PDF for uploading as part of your application package in Grants.gov.

The Table of Application Components within the "Prepare your Application" section of the NOFO lists which application components are required, as well as those that are conditionally required. For example, some components are included in the application depending on the type of applicant or the type of project.

Aside from the SF-424S and the IMLS Museum Program Information Form, which are completed in the Grants.gov Workspace, all application components must be submitted as PDF documents.



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)

These are the **Required Documents**. All applications must include the documents listed **here**. Omission of even just one might result in your application's rejection.

Also important to note there is a 7-page limit for the narrative. If you exceed the page limit specified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, we must remove the extras before your application goes out for review. That means your reviewer may see a paragraph or sentence end in mid air and will wonder about your organizational skills and your attentiveness to detail.

So, make sure your content fits into the page limits specified and make sure the number of pages holds when you convert your document to a PDF.



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

The second category of application components is that of **Conditionally Required Documents**. **Some** applications must include one, two, or even all four of these, and it's your job to figure out which are required for yours.

- If you are applying as a nonprofit, then you must include your proof of nonprofit status issued by the Internal Revenue Service. We will not accept a letter of State sales tax exemption as proof of nonprofit status.
- If you are using a federally negotiated indirect cost rate in your budget, then you must include a copy of your final rate agreement.
- If you will create digital products during the course of your project, then you must complete and submit a Digital Products Plan.
- If you are requesting support for conservation treatment, then you must include detailed condition reports and/or formal conservation treatment proposals.

Just like the required documents, omission of even one might result in your application's rejection.

Please note that the term “digital product” includes (1) digitized and born-digital content, resources, or assets; and (2) software. If you are creating any of these types of materials, you must include the digital products plan with your application.



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

The third group of application components is Supporting Documents, and here is a partial list of examples. Supporting documents are optional. You may submit some or none. Include only those items that will supplement your proposal. This is not the place to introduce brand new information, rather, as the name suggests, they should lend support to your project justification, work plan, and intended results that you've already spelled out in your application narrative.

For example, have you identified a partner whose involvement is key to the project's success? If so, a letter of support or commitment would go a long way to reassuring reviewers that they are 'on board' and the project will succeed. Pictures can help give reviewers – who may not be familiar with your institution, programs, collections, or community – a better idea of what you're describing within your narrative. Vendor quotes or equipment specifications show you've done some of the legwork in getting appropriate estimates for project costs.

We recommend that you be respectful of your reviewers' time and avoid any temptation to include hundreds of pages of extraneous material. Being judicious really does work to your benefit, as supporting documents can make – or break – an application. Include what is important, helpful, and directly relevant to your project, and stop there.

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

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

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



In this section we will go over the questions you will need to answer in your project Narrative and offer details on the review criteria associated with each of the 3 sections: Project Justification, Project Work Plan and Project Results.



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?

Now let's talk about the Narrative of your proposal. You have seven pages to cover three very important issues, and the Notice of Funding Opportunity provides lengthy guidance on what the Narrative should cover.

First is the PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified? Describe how you have used demographic information, economic circumstances, condition assessments, and other relevant data from reliable sources to define the need, problem, or challenge and develop the scope for the project.

Who is the primary audience for your project and how have they been involved in the planning? "Primary audience" refers to those who will be most immediately and positively affected by your project. Identify the number of individuals in the primary audience or in each primary audience, if you identify more than one.

Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project? "Beneficiaries" refers to those who are likely to be aided in the long-term by your project. They may or may not be the same as your "primary audience." Identify the number of individuals who will benefit from your project in the long term, if reliable and defensible counts are possible. Otherwise describe the characteristics of the beneficiaries you expect to be served eventually by your 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?

In the Application Review of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, under Peer Review Criteria, you will find a list of questions that reviewers are asked to consider when they review your proposal. It is a good idea to refer to these as you craft your narrative to be certain you are providing reviewers clear, solid information. You will see that they correspond fairly directly with the prompts you are given to write your narrative.

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.

One of the prompts in the Project Justification section of the narrative is the identification of the need, problem, or challenge your project addresses. It is foundational in your application, so keep these points in mind.

- The federal government wants its investment to result in SOMETHING getting better.
- As you define your need, problem, or challenge, articulate WHAT will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible. Will your museum be able to expand their services as a result of additional staff? Will new graduates be better prepared for the museum field with the requisite experience? Will collections be better cared for? Will their lifespan be extended? Will access to your collections and the information surrounding them be expanded? Identify why it is important that this particular change happens.
- Hone your problem definition carefully in clear, succinct terms.
- Gather and 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?

PROJECT WORK PLAN

If the Project Justification section was the "why", the Project Work Plan section is where you identify the 'who, what, when, and how'. Who will do what activities when, and using what resources? You should explain how you will track your progress toward achieving your intended results, and what you'll do if you need to correct course. We also ask you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project and to tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning. I'll say more about that in a few minutes.

Please note that in your budget you are required to add \$3,000 per year for travel to an IMLS-designated meeting. You will add this line item in the travel section of the IMLS budget form, on the federal grant funds side of the budget. This expense is used to cover your participation in a convening of grantees at a place and location to be determined by IMLS.



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?

Again, this is the list of questions, in the Peer Review Criteria section of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, that reviewers are asked to consider when they review your proposal, so make sure your narrative is answering these effectively.

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.

[Image: <https://pixabay.com/en/stick-figure-road-sign-traffic-sign-1097163/>]

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

An activity is something that someone does. It has a beginning and an end (just like projects), and you know when you've finished it because it doesn't need to be done any more.

An activity is NOT a goal, a result, or an outcome. Rather it is something you do as part of striving to achieve those.

Aim for a reasonable level of detail in identifying your activities.



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?

We also ask you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project and to tell us how you’ve taken that into account in your planning. Think of it as answering the question, “What if?”

There is no checklist of risks, but every project has them. The best proposals will show that you are aware of them and have thought through a plan for dealing with them. Look at your activities and think about what could go wrong. Focus on the ones where your experience (your own or that of your group) tells you, “Yes, that could happen” and identify steps you would take in response.

IMLS knows things go differently than expected. We just want you to prepare by identifying implementable options.

Here are some examples of risk that might be part of a project for which you might seek AAHC funding:

- A project may be dependent upon fundraising to generate the cost share, but it is not complete by the time the application is submitted. What will the institution do if that money is not available by the time the project gets underway?
- 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?

PROJECT RESULTS

The third section of your Narrative should be devoted to articulating your project's intended results.

This section is your chance to convince the reviewers that your project will result in something getting better. The need or problem you identified in your Project Justification will be addressed directly, and it will be diminished or eliminated altogether.

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

If your project will generate tangible products (and most do), here's the opportunity to describe them and make the case that they will be useful. And last but not least, we ask that you tell us how you will sustain the benefit of the project. How will this improvement that you propose to make continue once your grant is over?



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?

Again, here is the list of review questions that reviewers are asked to consider when they read and score the Project Results section of your narrative. These are found in the Peer Review Criteria section of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. All of your results should tie back to your need, problem, or challenge. You may well experience tangential benefits and/or positive outcomes, but make sure you identify them as “in addition to” and not “instead of” your original intended results. Reviewers are likely to see that as a disconnect.

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.

We often hear that defining intended results and success measures is challenging for applicants, so it’s worth spending a bit of time on this here.

Let’s think back to the questions we referenced a couple of slides ago when we talked about defining the need, problem, or challenge that your project is addressing. If you said someone will learn something, how will you know? If your problem related to segments of your community being better able to work together, how will you know when that has been achieved? If collections will be better cared for, how will you be sure and how will you measure “better?” If you’re digitizing to expand accessibility, how will you know when you’ve done it?

This focus on results and measuring success in meaningful ways is not new. There has been a tremendous amount of work done on ways to measure success. For you as an applicant though, we encourage you to consider using a logic model or an outcomes-based evaluation tool to explain your intended results and your plan for achieving them.



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

So, to recap: Your Narrative has three sections—Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results, and you have seven pages for it. The sections are all equally important. Write clearly, address what we ask you to address, and keep an eye on those review criteria. We're telling you here exactly what the reviewers will look for, so make it easy for them to find it and understand it.



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.

In summary, considering all the components of your application, there are four general characteristics of successful AAHC applications that reviewers will look for. As you prepare your application, keep these characteristics in mind.

First, **Institutional Impact:** Your project should build the capacity of your museum and/or support the growth and development of museum professionals at your museum or HBCU
Second, **In-depth knowledge:** Your proposal should reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.

Third, **Project-based design:** Your work plan should consist of a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge.

And fourth, **Demonstrable results:** Your project should generate measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

An application that has all of these four characteristics, will stand out in the review process, and will have the best chance of success for funding.



Application Tips and Next Steps

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

Awarded Grants Search

Home > Grants > Search Awarded Grants

Search by keywords...

Museum Grants for African American History and Culture | 2022

Table | DOWNLOAD THE DATA

Page 1 of 35 results

Log Number	Institution	Fiscal Year	Program	Federal Funds	Funding Office	City	State
MN-25109-OMG-22	Association of African American Museums	2022	Museum Grants for African American History and Culture	\$50,000	Office of Museum Services	Washington	DC
MN-25216-OMG-22	Jefferson School African American Heritage Center	2022	Museum Grants for African American History and Culture	\$109,853	Office of Museum Services	Charlottesville	VA
MN-25192-OMG-22	Morgan State University Elie Carril Jackson Civil Rights Museum	2022	Museum Grants for African American History and Culture	\$245,999	Office of Museum Services	Baltimore	MD
MN-25207-OMG-22	Museum Templers 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.

We want to share with you, the places to look for more information, such as the IMLS website, where you can find the awarded grants search to learn more about the projects we have funded through the AAHC program.

The Awarded Grants Search gives you an opportunity to explore our archive of grants that we have awarded in past years using a variety of criteria such as institution name, location, and keyword. Your search will provide basic information about the award and a brief description of the project. This can be extremely helpful as you put ideas together for your own project.

Sample Applications

Sample Applications

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.

We have also posted the narrative and schedule of completion for a cross-section of successful applications from the 2024 round. To find these examples, go to the Sample Applications on the IMLS website and scroll down the page to the AAHC examples. Looking at these proposals might help clarify your thinking about your own.

Sample Applications Continued

IMLS Museum Grants for African American History and Culture: Narrative Museum of the African Diaspora

1. Project Justification

Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) requests \$500,000 to expand its educational outreach program, MoAD in the Classroom (MIC). The program, entering its ninth year of operation, is an evidence-based arts program serving approximately 1,500 third and fourth-grade students each program year. It is consistent with recent research showing that participation in high-quality arts programs increases students' confidence and ability to retain knowledge, while adding to their depth of knowledge in content areas such as social studies and history. The core objective of MIC is to work collaboratively with Bay Area public school classroom teachers and MIC Teaching Artists to build an integrated curriculum highlighting themes of the African Diaspora through art and culture. To increase program reach, MoAD provides free professional development workshops for participating teachers with the goal of training Title I teachers to meet the recently adopted California Teaching Performance Expectations, which require teachers to access community resources including arts integration to make learning more individually and culturally relevant to all students'.

Which program goal and associated objects of Museum Grants for African American History and Culture will your project address?

MoAD in the Classroom aligns with the goals of the Museum Grants for African American History and Culture program by directly supporting IMLS Goal 1 to champion lifelong learning through the "shared knowledge and learning opportunities" for students, teachers, and family members. The program is explicitly designed to reach students from traditionally underserved and under-resourced communities. MoAD is also committed to serving a diverse community by centering schools that serve a wide array of students, teachers, and families. The program also supports IMLS AAHC Goal 1 to increase the capacity of MoAD and our ability to serve our community through the offering of free professional development for teachers working at our partner Title I schools to further the museum's goal of increasing access to new resources for historically marginalized students and teachers. The Coordinator position will increase the museum's capacity to serve our partner schools with more on the ground support to MIC Teaching Artists and partner classroom teachers.

1

IMLS Museum Grants for African American History and Culture: Schedule of Completion Museum of the African Diaspora

Activities	2023					2024						
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Project Promotion (Continuous)												
Hire All MIC Teaching Artists (only if needed)												
Training and Group Meetings with MIC Teaching Artists												
Recruit and Finalize 5 Members of the Curriculum Advisory Committee												
Public Print - Evaluation Activities												
Quarterly Meetings of the Curriculum Advisory Committee												
Hire Curriculum Writing Consultant												
Send Curriculum Booklets to Printer												
Research & Write Record Lesson Plans & Videos for online												
Launch Online Lesson Plans, Videos & Podcasts												
Annual Orientation with Classroom Teachers												
In-Class Activities with Students												
Classroom Teacher Professional Development Workshops (Monthly)												
Disseminate Educational Materials Online												
Student Art Project Creation												
Annual Student Showcases, Award Ceremony and Family Celebrations												
Outreach to New Schools (Ongoing)												

Each PDF contains a copy of the 7 page narrative and also the schedule of completion, some will also include a digital products plan.



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.

We can only make grants to **eligible** applicants that submit **complete** applications, including attachments, **on or before the deadline**. So here are some tips to help you do just that.

- Start early. You've already done that by participating in this webinar.
- Become familiar with Grants.gov's Workspace. It has many good features, including upfront validation, which allows you to correct errors prior to submission, and the opportunity to collaborate with others in creating your application. Consider starting with the Workspace Overview and check out the tutorials.
- Do your background research. Make it easy for the reviewers to see that you are up to date and know what you're talking about.
- Be sure your application is complete. Check it against the Table of Application Components in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- 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 and avoid any trauma created by technology challenges.

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

It's important to get your application submitted online through Grants.gov before the deadline. IMLS does not accept applications by mail or email.

In order to register with Grants.gov, you must have an active SAM.gov registration and Unique Entity Identifier number. So make sure your registrations for both of these sites are complete, your accounts are active, and that any necessary passwords are current. These registrations expire periodically so DO NOT WAIT until it's time to hit the 'submit' button to check on them. You should coordinate with any other staff members, such as your Authorized Organization Representative, who may hold the accounts and passwords you'll need to submit.

Both the SAM.gov and Grants.gov websites have robust help features and FAQs. If you run into technical issues with either of these sites, you should reach out to their help desks and request a tracking, case, or ticket number in order to document your issue and attempts at resolving it. Failure to have active SAM.gov or Grants.gov registrations by the application deadline is not an excuse for submitting a late application so again, start early.



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>

There are many components to the application and the Narrative is an essential and critical part of the package.

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. They also base their reviews only on the information contained in the application – so don't assume that a reviewer or IMLS will know something about your museum or your proposed project.

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

- Revisit the AAHC Notice of Funding Opportunity and follow the Narrative outline it provides.
- Be sure to consider the review criteria associated with each 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. The people who will review your application are museum professionals, but they may not be totally familiar with your particular field's shorthand. Make it easy for them to understand what you mean.
- An advantage to starting your application early is that you can ask a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit. Ask them to act like a reviewer who's seeing this for the first time.

At the bottom of this slide is a link to the IMLS website where you can sign up to become a peer reviewer. Even if you decide to submit an application for this round you may still serve as a Peer Reviewer.



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.**

Here are a few important dates relating to AAHC applications.

Applications must be received through Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on November 15, 2024. The date is non-negotiable. The time stamp is auto-generated by the Grants.gov system, and we have no ability to override it. We will say this repeatedly, to start early and submit your application early. That way, if you encounter a difficulty of any kind when submitting your proposal, you'll have some time to resolve the problem and resubmit.

After the application deadline, IMLS staff will review your application for completeness and eligibility, and you will hear from us via email if there are any problems. Next, we will select experienced and knowledgeable peer reviewers to read your applications and provide scores and comments based on the criteria outlined in the AAHC Notice of Funding Opportunity. IMLS staff will examine your budget, your financials, and your track record with past and current grants. We then prepare materials for the IMLS Deputy Director for Museums and the IMLS Director. By law, the IMLS Director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions, and this typically happens in May.

In early June 2025, we will notify you by email of the award decisions and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers.

AAHC projects must be scheduled to start on the first day of July 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.imls.gov/grants/available/museum-grants-african-american-history-and-culture>

- As you read through the NOFO and prepare your application, additional questions may arise before the application deadline. We can help you with learning more about the AAHC grant program or other grant programs at IMLS, address any specific concerns with the various application components or help you understand the review process.
- You may contact IMLS program staff by email or phone. Contact information is listed on the grant program landing page on the IMLS website.
- You may also schedule a counseling call to meet directly with program staff. Use the links found on the grant program landing to find an available time slot on our calendar. You will then receive an email with a calendar invite and Microsoft Teams meeting link.

Credit

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