Museums for America

Sample Application MA-255896-OMS-24
Project Category: Lifelong Learning

Walker Art Center

Amount awarded by IMLS:	$250,000
Amount of cost share:	$302,581

The Walker Art Center will reduce barriers for visitors with disabilities by planning and implementing interpretive tools and programs for learners with disabilities. Project activities will include the development of an updated interpretation plan, the design and production of new interpretive resources and materials, community engagements, and the expansion of accessibility programming. The project team will work closely with an advisory group, community partners, an evaluation consultant, and an accessibility design firm on the development of interpretive tools. As a result, the museum will benefit by incorporating guidelines for accessible interpretation and programming, along with new tools and resources to support visitors with disabilities, and visitors with disabilities will gain increased access to arts experiences through museum exhibitions.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Digital Product Plan
- 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.

A. PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Goals, Challenge, and Target Group: The Walker Art Center's proposed project, Accessibility at the Center (AAC), addresses the need for accessible museums in order to support lifelong learners of all abilities, promote inclusivity, and ensure equitable access to cultural and educational resources. The AAC will further the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) objectives to advance shared knowledge and learning opportunities for all, and to support training and professional development for museum staff (IMLS Objectives 1.1 and 1.2). The project will champion lifelong learners (IMLS and Museums for America Goal 1), specifically learners with disabilities, through the development of an updated interpretation plan; the design and production of new interpretive resources and materials; community engagements; and the expansion of accessibility programming (Museums for America Objectives 1.1 and 1.2).

The AAC will increase access, support lifelong learning, and improve museum experiences for the project's target group: people with disabilities, including visitors who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing, blind or partially-sighted, neurodivergent, and visitors with a physical disability. There is a large population of people with disabilities in the US (13% of Americans or 42.5 million people),[1] with higher rates for adults (27%).[2] Similarly, about 12% of all Minnesotans identify as having a disability;[3] among those, 44% reported having two or more disabilities.[4] While some disabilities are present at birth, studies show that older Americans are more likely to have a disability.[5] Minnesotans with disabilities experience higher rates of poverty, with 1 in 5 living below the poverty line (nearly 10% higher than all Minnesotans).[6] These disparities are noted alongside the dramatic shift in Minnesota's demographic makeup in recent years,[7] including the rapid growth of foreign-born Minnesotans who speak a language other than English at home.[8] It is critical to note these statistics to ensure that the Walker's approach to increasing accessibility is intersectional and works to eliminate barriers and disparities experienced by disabled people who hold multiple marginalized identities.

The Walker welcomes 600,000 annual visitors to its 19-acre site, which includes the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. Through the Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies (COVES)[9] survey data, the Walker knows that more than 8% of visitor groups to exhibitions and the Garden self-report that their group includes someone with a disability. However, the Walker's COVES data is incomplete; surveys are not administered during accessibility programming, and Garden surveys are not conducted during the winter months. In addition, there are differences in how people define disability, especially culturally and generationally, and therefore it is likely underreported.[10] As a result, the Walker anticipates its actual engagement of people with disabilities is higher than available data indicates. Furthermore, as life expectancy increases,[11] the Walker anticipates serving more older adults and people with disabilities in the future.

The Walker has a long history of providing accessible visitor resources, interpretation, and programs (see History of Walker Access Programs). However, d/Deaf and disabled visitors continue to experience barriers when engaging with Walker exhibitions. Through regular surveys and a 2021 journey-mapping study (see HGA Journey Mapping Project), visitors to the Walker's galleries have expressed frustrations with physical access (wayfinding, seating, stairs, elevators); negative sensory experiences (lighting, sound, color, sensory overload); and/or interpretation and programming (distracting sounds, lack of touch objects or audio tours). Specific feedback mentioned that audio elements were loud and distracting, and others noted the lack of braille and audio descriptions for artworks on view. While the Walker

[1] Leppert, Rebecca and Katherine Schaeffer, "8 facts about Americans with disabilities," Pew Research Center, July 24, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/07/24/8-facts-about-americans-with-disabilities/.

[2] "Disability Impacts All of Us Infographic," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html.

[3] "All Minnesotans by Disability Status," Minnesota Compass, https://www.mncompass.org/topics/demographics/disability.

[4] Egbert, Andi, "Minnesotans with Disabilities: Demographic and Economic Characteristics," Minnesota State Demographic Center, March 2017, https://mn.gov/admin/assets/minnesotans-with-disabilities-popnotes-march2017_tcm36-283045_tcm36-283045.pdf.

[5] "Aging and the Ada," ADA National Network, 2018, https://adata.org/factsheet/aging-and-ada#:~:text=More%20than%2030%20percent%20of,it%20means%20in%20everyday%20life.

[6] "All Minnesotans by Disability Status," Minnesota Compass.

[7] "Twin Cities Metro Regional Disparities by Race and Origin," MN Employment and Economic Development, November 2020, https://mn.gov/deed/assets/110220_Metro%20Area%20Racial%20Disparities%20Report%202018_tcm1045-341196.pdf.

[8] "Immigration and Language," Minnesota State Demographic Center, https://mn.gov/admin/demography/data-by-topic/immigration-language/.

[9] Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies (COVES), https://understandingvisitors.org/.

[10] Leahy, Ann, "Disability Identity in Older Age? - Exploring Social Processes That Influence Disability Identification with Ageing," Disability Studies Quarterly, 2023, https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/7780/7872.

[11] "Global Health Estimates: Life Expectancy and Leading Causes of Death and Disability," World Health Organization, https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/mortality-and-global-health-estimates.

provides access resources and programs,[12] most offerings are available only on specific days or upon request, and they are not regularly available for all exhibitions. Furthermore, the Walker's approach to exhibition design has historically not prioritized universal or equitable access as a regular practice. For example, while the Walker's 2022 exhibition *Carolyn Lazard: Long Take* featured artist-designed accessible seating and a transcript of audio and visual elements for DeafBlind visitors, the exhibitions that followed in that gallery did not include similar accessibility features.

To address barriers to access in exhibition design, a cross-departmental team of Walker staff developed an Exhibition Installation and Accessibility Manual in 2022, which outlines policies and effective practices to support accessible visitor experiences. As a next step, a consultant with expertise in inclusive design and a cohort of external stakeholders with disabilities will be engaged in FY24 and FY25 to review the manual and provide feedback. Importantly, this work informed planning for the proposed AAC project, which will build upon the manual by providing accessibility trainings for museum staff and expanding accessible interpretive strategies, resources, and programs for visitors.

Strategic Plan: The AAC addresses multiple areas of the Walker's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, which is designed to advance the Walker's commitments to centering audiences and building community while supporting and presenting the most compelling artists, art, and ideas of our time. Specifically, the AAC builds upon the first two goals of the plan: *Goal 1: Programs and Collections*: invest in programs and collections to increase access and spark creativity and curiosity; and *Goal 2: Engagement*: center audiences in the planning and presentation of programs to improve access and deepen engagement. The AAC also supports a key initiative under *Goal 3. Stewardship*: which calls for investment in museum staff in order to achieve the Walker's vision. Critically, the AAC aligns with the Walker's strategic plan goals and initiatives to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA), which build upon the Walker's multi-year DEIA work: leading a consortium of Twin Cities cultural organizations focused on DEIA (2016-ongoing); DEIA and anti-racism staff trainings (2017-ongoing); and the formation of a DEIA staff working group (2020). Beginning in 2022, consultants from Creative Catalysts led a year-long DEIA planning process with Walker staff to advance the goal: "to center equity and impact in everything we do." The resulting three-year Equity Action Plan (EAP) outlines specific goals and actions along with capacity and resources (see Strategic Plan Summary). This work also informed the Walker's approach to increasing accessibility, which underpins the proposed AAC project (see Glossary of Terms).

Beneficiaries: The *primary* beneficiaries, and the AAC project's target group, are d/Deaf and disabled people, including visitors, learners, and artists, as well as staff working with these groups who may also have a disability. The Walker will center cross-disability and intersectional perspectives across racial/ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity; generation and age; marginalized sexual orientations and gender identities; and more. To achieve this, the initiative will be informed and shaped by the disability community, with seven beneficiaries engaged in an Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG). AAG members will include visitors, artists, educators, and community partner representatives who will provide their perspectives and help determine and prioritize the interpretive tools and accessibility programs to be developed. The *secondary* beneficiaries are Walker frontline and programming staff who directly engage the public, including 75 staff across the education, visitor experience, gallery assistant, programming, and building operations teams. Staff will benefit from focused trainings, professional development opportunities, and knowledge gained through working with the AAG and accessibility consultants. A *third* set of beneficiaries includes all Walker staff (120 full-time and 74 part-time staff) across curatorial, program, and operations areas. All staff will gain knowledge through information sessions, trainings, and access to new resources to inform their work and share with the public. The AAC will also engage and support learnings for the internal Accessibility Working Group (AWG), which includes 18 staff across departments working to inform accessibility planning related to the Walker's strategic plan. In total, the AAC project will engage an estimated 34,725 beneficiaries (see Participation Overview).

B. PROJECT WORK PLAN

Activities: Over a three-year period, September 2024 to August 2027, the Walker will increase access and learning opportunities, improve visitor experiences, and expand programming for d/Deaf and disabled learners through the proposed three-phase AAC project. In preparation, the Walker engaged Sheri Levinsky-Raskin of SJLR Solutions, LLC (SJLR) to inform AAC planning and serve as a contracted evaluator. The Walker also engaged the Institute of Human Centered Design (IHCD) to consult on the planning for and design of new accessible interpretive tools (see consultant resumes and proposals).

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[12] Walker Access Programs (https://walkerart.org/access-programs) and Resources (https://walkerart.org/visit/accessibility/).

Phase 1: Capacity Building (September 2024–August 2025): Activities will include an accessibility program and interpretive resource assessment, field research, professional development, and staff trainings. At the start of the AAC project, SJLR will prepare an evaluation plan for review and refinement with the project team. This will involve a needs assessment and gap analysis internally with staff, including the AWG, and externally with audiences from diverse disability communities, including the AAG.

Twice monthly meetings between SJLR and the project team will be scheduled to conduct an audit that will inform the baseline for the AAC's evaluation and data collection plan. Specific activities will include collecting information about the Walker's existing accessibility programming and interpretation strategies; current relationships and partnerships with members of local and national disability communities; and feedback from visitors and program participants through surveys, interviews, and polls. SJLR will also interview members of the AWG to gather data on current Walker projects related to accessibility, as well as the group's feeling of preparedness to support disabled learners.

Early on in phase 1, a part-time Educator fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) will be recruited and onboarded to join the Walker's cohort of 7-10 professional museum educators. The new Educator will prepare for and facilitate accessibility programs and expand the Walker's ability to support ASL programming (see position description).

Also in phase 1, the project team will advance existing partnerships with organizations like the Autism Society of Minnesota while working to build new relationships with other organizations embedded within and serving local d/Deaf and disabled communities in the Twin Cities area. New partners may include such groups as DeafBlind Services Minnesota, Somali Parents Autism Network, and Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf. Partner conversations in phase 1 will critically inform the development of interpretive resources and programs.

In September 2024, the Walker will purchase five new sets of mobile Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) to replace the Walker's old, malfunctioning sets. The new ALDs will improve audibility for visitors who are hard-of-hearing while they are participating in guided tours of the Walker galleries and Garden and/or attending other programming. Frontline staff will be instructed on the optimal use of the devices and how to support visitors in utilizing this new resource.

In December 2024, the IHCD will begin to review the Walker's existing interpretive tools and strategies. This will include an in-person visit at the Walker with IHCD staff in February 2025 to familiarize themselves with Walker exhibitions and the built environment, and meet with SJLR and the AAG. IHCD staff will review feedback that will help to inform the development and prototyping of new interpretive tools that leverage universal design strategies.

Two staff trainings for frontline staff and programmers will focus on: 1) *Disability awareness*: to prepare staff to identify barriers for d/Deaf and disabled visitor participation and provide guidance for creating a more inclusive experience, and 2) *Basic ASL*: to provide an introduction to ASL and its history, instruction on basic signs and phrases, and effective communication strategies. To design and lead these training sessions, the project team will hire external accessibility experts; this may include staff from the Community Education division of Minneapolis Public Schools[13] and/or Scott Artley, an independent accessibility consultant and Accessibility Program Director at the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council.[14] In addition, SJLR will provide training to the project team on accessible evaluation techniques, beginning in phase 1 and continuing throughout the project period.

In March 2025, two members of the project team and SJLR will travel to New York to conduct research visits with staff at peer museums that have well-established accessibility programs and resources, such as videos and tours in ASL, multimedia artworks that feature captions or transcripts for visitors who are d/Deaf or hard-of-hearing, and verbal descriptions of artworks. Museums include the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; the Intrepid Museum; the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA); and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

In August 2025, two members of the project team will attend the Kennedy Center's Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD), a three-day conference focused on strategies to advance inclusion of people with disabilities in arts and cultural spaces. The conference will provide an opportunity for the project team to connect with arts professionals and artists who specialize in disability and accessibility. Connections with colleagues in the field will facilitate the exchange of ideas and effective practices early on in the AAC project.

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[13] Community Education division of Minneapolis Public Schools: https://commed.mpls.k12.mn.us/Home.
[14] Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, Scott Artley: https://mrac.org/staff/scott-artley/.

Throughout phase 1, the Walker will continue to offer a slate of current resources and programming for visitors with disabilities (see History of Walker Access Programs). Staff educators will design and facilitate programs and tours. Contracted teaching artists will create and lead art-making activities, and contracted facilitators will deliver programs in ASL along with specialized workshops. Through an expansion of the number of contracted d/Deaf and disabled artists and facilitators, learners with disabilities will increasingly see themselves reflected at the Walker. Accommodation providers will also be contracted for language interpretation, translation services, captioning, and braille production.

SJLR will distill insights gleaned during phase 1 in a report shared with the project team, AAG, and AWG; this first-year report will be essential to informing project implementation in phase 2.

Phase 2: Interpretation Plan and Program Development (September 2025–August 2026): Phase 2 implementation will include staff recruitment, initial development of the Walker's accessible interpretation plan, piloting new interpretive strategies and tools, iterative testing, and expansion of accessibility programming. The audit results and evaluation plan designed by SJLR in phase 1 will offer substantial guidance for phase 2 activities.

A full-time Accessibility Programs and Resources Specialist will be hired for a two-year term (September 2025–August 2027) to support the production and evaluation of accessible interpretive tools and programming (see position description).

In September 2025, the project team will begin work on the development of an updated interpretation plan for engaging visitors with Walker exhibitions, with a focus on accessible strategies that respond to the needs of d/Deaf and disabled learners. The interpretation plan will be designed to complement and build upon the Walker's Exhibition Installation and Accessibility Manual. The project team will work closely with SJLR, IHCD, and the AAG to determine relevant and effective interpretive strategies and tools, and how best to design and incorporate them into exhibitions. These efforts will be developed, piloted, and tested in concert with two exhibitions that coincide with the AAC project:

1) *This Must Be the Place: Inside the Walker's Collections* (June 2024–January 2029) is a major reinstallation of the Walker's permanent collection, featuring 100-120 art works across 10,000 sq. ft. of gallery space. The exhibition will present iconic works in the Walker's holdings alongside lesser-known and recently acquired works across all mediums. Unfolding over three large galleries, each will present an overarching theme: 1) figurative presentations, 2) domestic scenes and public spaces, and 3) land art, minimal, and postminimal work. A primary goal driving the planning for and design of the exhibition is to ensure accessible and inclusive visitor experiences with the Walker's renowned collections of modern and contemporary art.

2) *Christine Sun Kim: Words Shape Reality* (November 2025–April 2026) is the artist's first mid-career survey, co-organized by the Walker and the Whitney Museum of American Art. As a visual and sound artist, performer, and activist who identifies as Deaf, Kim is a connective node for the d/Deaf community, whose artists have seldom been seen in large-scale solo exhibitions. Accessibility and equity are core concerns for the artist and museum partners, from planning through execution, including robust interpretive frameworks, community partnerships, and staff trainings that will center and explore the complexities of disability and d/Deaf lived experience.

The project team will partner with the IHCD to design prototypes of new interpretive tools that will be piloted in concert with these two exhibitions, and to consult on user-testing strategies. New tools may include audio recordings and/or screen-reader accessible PDFs of verbal descriptions of exhibitions and artworks; exhibition texts in braille and large print; and alternate ways to experience artworks on view in the galleries, such as audio described and captioned videos of the experience of exploring immersive artworks that may not be accessible to people who use mobility devices. Materials needed to support the creation of touch models via a 3D printer (secured by the Walker outside of the AAC project) for select artworks on view in the permanent collection installation will also be purchased during phase 2.

Additionally, the IHCD will provide consultation on the design of sensory-friendly tools, including production of a multilingual sensory map of the Walker's 19-acre campus to highlight spaces for visitors where sensory stimuli may be present or lacking. This may include exhibitions with sound elements, flashing lights, or smells; open spaces that are more conducive to movement; and quiet areas to rest. The map will help all visitors experience the Walker on any day of the week, whether they are attending a specific accessibility program or not. The project team will also investigate, in concert with a comprehensive audit of the Walker's building planned for 2024, the opportunity to designate a sensory-

friendly space for visitors within the museum.[15] If suitable permanent space is not available, the project team will work with IHCD to produce a set of sensory-friendly interpretive tools and accessible furniture that can be set up in different areas of the building as exhibitions and events change.

In addition to new tools, phase 1 findings will guide the development of accessibility programming to be relaunched, piloted, and tested in phases 2 and 3. This will include relaunching programs that were placed on temporary hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as Educator-led exhibition tours for visitors who are Blind or partially sighted, and programs for visitors with Alzheimer's and memory loss. This will also include the addition of new activities and increasing the frequency of current offerings, such as programs designed for visitors with sensory sensitivities (see History of Walker Access Programs). The Walker will partner with local organizations embedded within the disability community—like BLIND, Inc. and the Autism Society of Minnesota—to relaunch, pilot, and test programming.

As new tools, resources, and programs are launched, the frontline, educator, and curatorial staff teams will receive instructional trainings. The project team will facilitate internal meetings to introduce the new offerings to staff and provide guidance about effective practices for assisting disabled visitors with utilization. Facilitators from partners like BLIND, Inc. may also be contracted to conduct educational sessions for staff. Additionally, the education team and staff responsible for the design and interpretation of exhibitions will participate in trainings on Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning. Trainings will be conducted by an external consultant with expertise in this area, such as John O'Neill, a disability advocate, designer, and Associate Professor of Graphic Design at the University of Minnesota Duluth.[16]

Marketing strategies and communications plans will also be developed and tested during phase 2. A wide range of strategies will be used, including targeted accessible social media; flyers distributed at organizational partner locations, libraries, and community centers; paid advertisements in various media, including ads during disability-related programming on community radio stations; event listings on a local accessible cultural events calendar;[17] and additional collateral. Plans will be developed in consultation with the AAG and partner groups to ensure effective and accessible communication channels. Additionally, organizations engaged with the development of the Walker's new accessibility resources and programs will be key partners in communicating and connecting with their constituents.

Throughout phase 2, SJLR will travel to the Walker up to three times to observe and begin assessment of interpretive tools and accessibility programming, which will involve engaging with visitors; the project team, AWG, and other staff; and members of the AAG. This will include examination of accessibility, usability, and impact on learners with disabilities, and identification of areas for further improvement. SJLR will work closely with and provide training for the project team to conduct iterative assessment and user testing through the use of surveys, focus groups, and interviews. This will provide staff with valuable first-hand experience putting concepts in to practice, alongside trainings on building evaluative capacity and accessible evaluative strategies for ongoing assessment beyond the AAC project. SJLR will also collect data and insights from phase 1 and 2 staff trainings, and identify needs and recommendations for further trainings. Finally, SJLR will submit a second report at the close of phase 2 for review with the project team, AWG, and AAG.

Phase 3: Program Expansion and Evaluation (September 2026–August 2027): During the third and final phase of the AAC, the project team will continue to prototype, pilot, test, and make iterative improvements to accessibility programming and interpretive tools, working in close partnership with the IHCD. The production and installation of a sensory-friendly space and/or accessible tools and furniture will also be completed.

Additionally, the project team will partner with local organizations serving disabled communities to develop and pilot 2-3 new, recurring accessibility programs. Program expansion could, for example, include virtual or hybrid programming for people who are immunocompromised or living in residential care facilities, and/or sensory-friendly programming specifically designed for adults.

SJLR will continue trainings in accessible evaluation strategies for the project team, with a focus on building evaluative capacity. Marketing and communication plans will be assessed, revised as needed, and rolled out to reach the widest possible audience, including working with organizational partners to reach target audiences for each program.

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[15] "Creating a Sensory-Friendly Environment," The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, https://www.guggenheim.org/accessibility/guggenheim-for-all/guggenheim-for-all-toolkit/creating-a-sensory-friendly-environment.
[16] University of Minnesota Duluth, John O'Neill: https://cahss.d.umn.edu/faculty-staff/john-oneill.
[17] Minnesota Calendar of Accessible Arts Events: https://calendar.mnaccess.org/calendar/.

Data collection, including focus groups, surveys, intercept interviews with visitors, and interviews with the AAG, will continue to assess the efficacy and impact of new tools and programs. Insights will inform finalization of the Walker's interpretation plan that will guide planning for future exhibitions, in tandem with the Exhibition Installation and Accessibility Manual. As data collection and assessments are completed, SJLR will prepare a final project report documenting the evaluation process, findings, and recommendations for the Walker's accessibility work moving forward. The project team will also prepare a final report to document their learnings.

The project team will disseminate the final report internally with the AWG and across departments to inform the Walker's strategic directions and priorities beyond the AAC project. Findings and effective practices will also be shared externally with peers in the museum field through articles on the Walker's website (walkerart.org), collaborations with local and national museum partners, and presentations at conferences, such as LEAD and the American Alliance for Museums.

Project management, resources, and tracking: The AAC project will be led by *Sarah Lampen*, Associate Director of Learning and Accessibility. Lampen joined the Walker in 2019 after managing gallery learning, docent, and accessibility programs and serving as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator at the Portland Art Museum. As project lead, Lampen will provide strategic direction and oversight for the AAC, serve as the primary contact with project consultants SJLR and IHCD, organize and manage the external AAG, administer the project budget, and ensure project milestones and goals are met. *Janine DeFeo*, Manager of Interpretation, will work closely with Lampen to shape and manage the interpretive tools and materials, the interpretation plan, and evaluation. *Leia Wambach*, Family and Access Programs Coordinator, will provide project administration and program support, including coordination of AAG meetings. The three members of the project team will work closely with the two external consultants: Sheri Levinsky-Raskin of SJLR Solutions (SJLR) and Anoopa Sundararajan, Human Factors and Inclusive Technology Researcher at the Institute of Human Centered Design (IHCD) (see Key Project Staff, resumes, and consultant materials).

The addition of an Accessibility Programs and Resources Specialist (two-year term) will support the development, piloting, and testing of accessible interpretive tools and programs. The Walker's cohort of Educators will facilitate programs and tours, including a new part-time Educator fluent in ASL. The AAC project will also require staff participation across departments, including frontline and curatorial/program staff; the design and marketing teams; and staff in events production to support audio/visual needs. The project team will be further supported by staff serving on the cross-departmental AWG as well as Amanda Hunt, Head of the Public Engagement, Learning, and Impact department, who will provide senior-level leadership and support.

Externally, the AAC project will be informed and supported by members of the AAG. Through recommendations from the AAG and partner groups, the Walker will contract accessibility support services, including language interpretation and translation, and the production of captions and printed braille materials. The Walker will also contract teaching artists and external facilitators to design and deliver accessible programs and trainings for staff.

To track progress throughout the AAC project, the three members of the project team will meet bimonthly with SJLR. The internal AWG will meet quarterly to review feedback from Walker audiences, learnings related to accessibility, and AAC findings and plans, and to support project implementation as needed and appropriate. The external AAG will meet three times annually to provide feedback and guidance throughout the project.

Risks: The inherent challenge of the proposed AAC project relates to the intricate task of achieving increased accessibility while acknowledging the uniqueness of individual and potentially intersecting disabilities; in short, there is no such thing as a universally accessible program or space. Applying a cohesive interpretation plan across multiple exhibitions, especially given the great diversity of artistic practice and innovation regularly presented at a contemporary art museum like the Walker, is another challenge. For these reasons, success of the AAC project will require cross-departmental staff commitment; consistent communication; meaningful input and involvement from disabled staff, project beneficiaries, AAG participants, consultants, and community partners; flexibility in approach; realistic expectations; and a steadfast dedication to continual enhancement of accessibility measures.

C. PROJECT RESULTS

Intended Results and Products: The primary aim of the AAC project is to remove barriers and expand access to lifelong learning opportunities and arts experiences for d/Deaf and disabled people visiting the Walker. As a result, visitors with disabilities will see the Walker as a resource, be able to more consistently and easily access Walker exhibitions, feel increasingly connected to and reflected in the Walker's program, and feel welcome and included.

Historically, museums have approached accessibility from a reactive place, primarily relying on specialized programming to make an exhibition accessible or adding an accommodation like ASL interpretation to a program only upon request from a visitor. Through the AAC project, the Walker will develop effective practices for centering accessibility from the outset of planning for a program or exhibition, and for supporting d/Deaf and disabled learners on any day they choose to visit the Walker. An aspirational outcome that the Walker will continually strive for, throughout the AAC project and beyond, is that learners with disabilities are able to access exhibitions, programs, and resources on their own terms, without having to request special accommodations.

For the public, the results of the AAC project will be seen and experienced through new accessible interpretive tools, programs, and materials. This will empower visitors with disabilities to deepen their understanding of contemporary art and culture, and to explore new ideas that artists are examining today that invite us to think about the world in new ways. This is at the very heart of the Walker's mission and vision as a contemporary art museum, and central to its longstanding institutional commitments to accessibility and inclusion.

Moreover, the Walker seeks to increase and expand partnerships with disabled artists as well as organizational partners embedded within and serving the disability community; the project team will leverage the Walker as an accessible place for learning about contemporary art and connecting with artists and community. The AAC project will be critically informed by members of the disability community and accessibility experts, which will in turn help to form meaningful, lasting relationships for the Walker with d/Deaf and disabled artists and partners. These efforts will increase a level of confidence amongst the disability community about partnering with the Walker, knowing that staff have the capacity, knowledge, and commitment to do so.

For the Walker, the AAC project will result in an updated interpretation plan—with clear standards and practical workflows—that will guide the staff's work to continually incorporate an accessibility lens into interpretation for exhibitions and programs, from the early planning stage through execution and evaluation. Through the interpretation plan and extensive staff trainings, Walker staff will gain the knowledge and confidence necessary to engage and support d/Deaf and disabled visitors. For the education team in particular, this project will provide staff with more data, materials, and knowledge to inform their work across programs that engage different but intersecting audiences, including K-12 schools, teens, families, community partners, and the general public. Trainings for frontline staff focused on disability awareness, basic ASL, and effective communication strategies, along with trainings for programmers and designers in universal design techniques, will result in a more comprehensive institutional approach to centering audiences and accessibility as well as a more consistent experience for disabled visitors any day they choose to visit the Walker.

Finally, the project team's work with SJLR to develop an evaluation plan that centers accessibility will result in sustained capacity to embed accessible and respectful evaluative practices into the Walker's work moving forward. This also has the potential to inspire change in the field for how museums approach learning about and soliciting feedback from audiences. Museums have historically relied on methods like surveys and focus groups, which are not always structured in a way that is accessible to visitors with disabilities; this results in limited representation of disabled visitors in institutional data. The development of additional evaluative methodologies will result in a better understanding of disabled audiences' needs and interests, and provide learnings that will be shared with the broader museum field.

Sustainability: Longevity and sustainability are essential components of the AAC project. First, alignment with the Walker's forthcoming permanent collection installation, on view through January 2029, will provide a longstanding platform from which to pilot, test, and evaluate new interpretive tools and programs. As artworks are drawn from the Walker's holdings, these new resources will continue to be utilized with future collection installations. Furthermore, the new interpretation plan, in tandem with the Exhibition Installation and Accessibility Manual, will guide accessibility strategies for Walker exhibitions and programs well beyond the project period. Temporary investments in consultants, staff trainings, research trips, and equipment purchases will conclude at the end of the AAC project period, while staff positions as well as accessible interpretation and programmatic activities will continue to be supported through the Walker's Public Engagement, Learning, and Impact department. The new standards and workflows developed through the AAC project, along with knowledge gained through extensive staff trainings, will contribute to the shared accountability and cross-departmental collaboration necessary to advance the Walker's work to center audiences and accessibility. Relationships built with members of the AAG, artists, and partner organizations will also continue beyond the project period, and will inform the creation of future tools and program activities. Finally, the project team's work with SJLR and IHCD will have a lasting impact on staff capacity to incorporate universal design and accessible evaluation techniques into their work.

YEAR 1: 9/1/2024 - 8/31/2025	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Meetings: Cross-departmental Accessibility Working Group (AWG)	X			X			X			X		
Meetings: Project team and Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG)		X				X				X		
Meetings: Project team and Evaluator (SJLR)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meetings: Project team with Community Partners	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meetings: Project team and Design Consultant (IHCD)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Purchase and training for Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)	X											
Recruit and onboard Part-time Educator, Accessibility Programs	X	X										
Recruit Accessiblilty Programs and Resource Specialist										X	X	X
Evaluator-led audit/review of existing interpretive tools and accessibility programs in consultation with Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG)		X	X	X	X	X	X					
Evaluator (SJLR) prepares evaluation plan with data collection approaches and tools		X	X	X	X							
Evaluator (SLJR) implements the evaluation plan and collects data and insights						X	X	X	X			
Evaluator (SJLR) interviews and surveys with WAC staff to evaluate imapct of staff trainings						X				X		
Evaluator (SJLR) prepares and submits Year 1 report to WAC staff											X	X
Research trip: Project team and Evaluator (SJLR) to NYC to meet with peer museums							X					
Research trip: LEAD conference for WAC staff												X
Travel: Evaluator (SJLR) visits WAC						X				X		
Travel: Design Consultant (IHCD) visits the Walker						X						
Staff training: Disability Awareness						X						
Staff training: Intro to American Sign Language (ASL)									X			
Ongoing accessibility programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ongoing planning for accessibility in exhibition planning/design	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

YEAR 2: 9/1/2025 - 8/31/2026	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Meetings: Cross-departmental Accessibility Working Group (AWG)	X			X			X			X		
Meetings: Project team and Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG)		X				X				X		
Meetings: Project team and Evaluator (SJLR)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meetings: Project team and Community Partners	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meetings: Project team and Design Consultant (IHCD)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Onboard Accessibility Programs and Resource Specialist	X											
Begin Development of Interpretation Plan	X											
Develop, pilot, and assess new interpretive tools in select exhibitions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Design and produce new sensory map and update social narrative(s)	X	X	X									
Produce tactile models for select objects in the permanent collection	X	X	X									
Planning for sensory friendly space and/or resources							X	X	X	X	X	X
Relaunch former Accessibility Programs such as Contemporary Journeys, monthly tours for visitors who are blind or partially-sighted, etc.						X			X			
Evaluate relaunched accessibility programs						X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluator (SJLR) visits WAC	X					X						
Evaluator (SJLR) trains WAC staff in accessible evaluation strategies	X					X						
Evaluator (SJLR) interviews and surveys WAC staff to evaluate imapct of staff trainings	X					X						
Evaluator (SJLR) prepares and submits Year 2 report to WAC staff											X	X
Staff training: WAC-led staff trainings to introduce new interpretive tools									X			X
Staff training: Universal Design	X											
Staff training: targeted training to support audiences at accessibility programming					X							
Marketing: promote relaunched accessibility programs						X			X			
Ongoing Accessibility Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ongoing planning for accessibility in exhibition planning/design	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

YEAR 3: 9/1/2026 - 8/31/2027	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Meetings: Cross-departmental Accessibility Working Group (AWG)	X			X			X			X		
Meetings: Project team and Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG)		X				X				X		
Meetings: Project team and Evaluator (SJLR)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meetings: Project team and Community Partners	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meetings: Project team and Design Consultant (IHCD)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Develop and pilot new interpretive tools in select exhibitions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Continue and complete iterative assessment of interpretive tools begun in Year 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Finalize updated Interpretation Plan											X	
Production and installation of sensory-friendly space and/or tools	X	X	X									
Evaluator (SJLR) continues staff training in accessible evaluation strategies	X				X							
Evaluator (SJLR) completes final summative report												X
Prepare final evaluation materials for final IMLS report											X	
Prepare final report for IMLS												X
Marketing: promote new and expanded access programs and resources	X				X				X			
Travel: Evaluator (SJLR) visits WAC										X		
Staff training: Interpretive tools				X								
Share key learnings internally and externally										X	X	X
Launch new and/or expanded accessibility programs	X				X				X			
Ongoing Accessibility Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ongoing planning for accessibility in exhibition planning/design	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluate accessibility programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

What digital products will you create?
Through the Accessibility at the Center (AAC) project, the Walker will produce a variety of interpretive tools available in digital format to support visitors in preparing for their visit, navigating the building, and exploring the permanent collection and forthcoming exhibition of work by artist Christine Sun Kim. To ensure the tools are relevant and useful to d/Deaf and disabled visitors, the project team will organize and work with an Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG).

Tools provided in a digital format may include screen-reader accessible large print PDFs of exhibition interpretive wall text and object labels; screen reader-accessible PDF transcripts of audio from artworks that include sound; screen reader-accessible PDFs and/or audio recordings of verbal descriptions of artworks; American Sign Language (ASL) videos that provide interpretative and contextual information about artworks; and audio described and captioned videos of the experience of navigating an inaccessible artwork or installation. Additionally, the Walker will produce updated social narratives in an accessible PDF format to help visitors prepare for their visit to the Walker, as well as a sensory map that will be updated regularly to accurately communicate and describe the sensory environment of the Walker's building and exhibitions. This map will be shared as a screen reader-accessible PDF on the Walker's website.

The Walker anticipates producing approximately 75 digital interpretive tools over the course of the three-year AAC project. All tools produced and hosted online will meet World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) accessibility guidelines. Any images posted online will include HTML object records comprised of images and metadata.

How will you make your digital products openly available (as appropriate)?
Digital tools will be made openly available for download or streaming for free on the Walker's website (walkerart.org), the Walker's guide on the Bloomberg Connects app, and/or on the Walker's social media channels that are freely accessible (YouTube, Instagram, etc.). The venue for each digital interpretive tool will be chosen in consultation with the AAG to ensure maximum accessibility for d/Deaf and disabled users.

The Walker's website is hosted on an assortment of Amazon Web Services for its run-time operation with support provided by developers. The collections are hosted using a mix of components, including as MongoDB, Omeka, RestHeart, and Wordpress, as well custom software developed internally.

What rights will you assert over your digital products, and what limitations, if any, will you place on their use?
Will your products implicate privacy concerns or cultural sensitivities, and if so, how will you address them?
All content including images, text documents, audio, video, and interactive media published on the Walker website is for noncommercial, educational, journalistic and/or personal use only. Any commercial use or republication is strictly prohibited. Copying, redistribution, or exploitation for personal or corporate gain is not permitted. These are standard restrictions. The copyright will be visible at the bottom left of the Walker home page; this links to a description of the terms of use: http://www.walkerart.org/terms-of-use. Each image also notes these rights and conditions. Conditions also note any entity wishing to procure images (for inclusion in an exhibition catalogue or similar publication) may contact the Walker via a form linked in the statement.

Interpretive tools may be developed for artworks included in the Walker's permanent collection or special exhibitions that implicate privacy concerns or cultural sensitivities. The Walker will work with the artists who have produced the artwork when possible and consult with relevant communities when necessary to ensure that the content of the artwork is appropriately contextualized within the interpretive tools.

How will you address the sustainability of your digital products?
The Walker's Design Department uses a separate server to store all final designed works. Images will also be saved to SmartStor. Source files will be saved on the Walker's media database with metadata. The collection databases, media database, and storage, which house digital images, are primary institutional assets preserved and maintained by the Walker's Registration and Information Technology Departments. The databases are served centrally to facilitate regular backup using proprietary methods allowing protection of live data. This data is written to disk as backup, then backed up again to an offsite storage location–all on a regular schedule. Backup of the MongoDb server is conducted nightly and other databases are backed up at regular intervals. These backups, kept in Amazon Web Services (AWS) S3 buckets, are retained for a minimum of 14 days. The Walker is committed to broadening and maintaining digital access to these records and images through its web assets in perpetuity. Costs for the back-up and upkeep of web assets and database resources are carried in the Walker's operating budget as core organizational functions.

Performance Measure	Data We Will Collect (e.g., counts, costs, weights, volumes, temperatures, percentages, hours, observations, opinions, feelings)	Source of Our Data (e.g., members of the target group, project staff, stakeholders, internal/ external documents, recording devices, databases)	Method We Will Use (e.g., survey, questionnaire, interview, focus group, informal discussion, observation, assessment, document analysis)	Schedule (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, beginning/end)
	Example: At the end of each month, using a report prepared by the registrar, we will compare the cumulative count of rehoused objects against the total number proposed for the project. *Example: At the end of each project year, our external consultant will present results of the ongoing observation-based evaluation and compare them against our intended project results.*			
Effectiveness: The extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results	- In year 1, Evaluator Sheri Levinsky-Raskin will develop an evaluation plan in consultation with Walker project staff and an Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG). The AAG will help determine the interpretive tools and programs the Walker will produce, as well as participate in the evaluation of these efforts, and provide feedback and guidance throughout the project. The evaluation plan will measure the impact of new interpretive tools and strategies in exhibitions, the impact of new programming for d/Deaf and disabled visitors, and the impact of trainings on staff perceptions of feeling equipped to engage and support disabled visitors. - To establish a baseline for this work in year 1, beginning in October 2024, the project team and the Evaluator will review and compile existing data from visitor surveys and visitor experience studies; post-program surveys; the rate at which visitors access current accessible interpretive tools; and pre-surveys and interviews from staff. - Beginning in October 2024, in partnership with the project team and the AAG, the Evaluator will conduct an audit of existing accessibility programs and resources to inform the development and design of new programs and resources. Methodology to solicit feedback from disabled visitors and non-visitors to the Walker may include: surveys, interviews, polls, and focus groups. - In years 2 and 3, the project team and the Evaluator will evaluate the impact of new interpretive tools through prototyping, user testing, surveys, intercept interviews, focus groups, and other strategies. - In years 2 and 3, the project team and the Evaluator will evaluate the impact of existing, new, and relaunched accessibility programs through pilots, surveys, interviews with program participants, and other strategies. - In years 1 and 2, the Evaluator will measure the impact of training on staff perceptions of how equipped they are to engage and support visitors with disabilities through pre-and post-surveys and interviews. - In July and August of years 1 and 2, the Evaluator will produce reports summarizing the data collected and learnings for each year. These reports will support planning for future phases of the project. - In July and August 2027, the Evaluator will produce a final report summarizing the data collected, evaluation methodologies, key learnings/findings, and suggestions for future directions to expand on the Walker's accessibility work moving forward.			

	Example: Twice per year, we will assess our expenditures for program supplies on a per-person-served basis. *Example: Each quarter, we will calculate the dollar value of volunteer hours contributed to the project as recorded in our online volunteer management system.*
Efficiency: How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group	• In years 2 and 3, the Evaluator will train project staff in accessible evaluation techniques; staff will evaluate programming and resources when the Evaluator is not onsite and after the project ends. • In June 2025, the audit and review of existing accessibility programs and resources in Year 1 will be reviewed by the AAG to determine priorities for the development of programs and tools throughout the project period. • In September 2025, project staff will begin to incorporate key learnings and tools that are determined to have the most impact into the Interpretation Plan, continuing to revise and incorporate new learnings in years 2 and 3 to produce a finalized plan by July 2027. • Bimonthly, the project staff will meet with the Evaluator to ensure that work is progressing and key milestones are being met. • Trainings will be planned at times that accommodate the most front-line staff participation as possible, and will be recorded when possible for staff who are not able to attend, or who join the Walker after trainings have taken place. Trainings for front-line staff and programmers are anticipated to take place in February, May, and September 2025 and May 2026.
	Example: At the beginning, the mid-point, and end of the project, we will administer a satisfaction survey to staff who have participated in the training. *Example: We will gather opinions about our online services through questionnaires provided to every 20th user.*
Quality: How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group	• Meeting with the project team three times each year, the AAG will provide key insights and feedback throughout the project. The AAG will help define the tools and programs that will be developed, prioritizing activities for the most impact. • Throughout the project, d/Deaf and disabled visitors to programs and exhibitions will be invited to provide feedback via surveys, interviews, and focus groups. • Throughout the project, the Walker will contract teaching artists and facilitators with disabilities to design and facilitate programming. • When possible, project staff will work with disabled artists in the production of interpretive tools and resources. • In years 2 and 3, the Walker will partner with organizations embedded within and serving the disability community to develop and/or produce new programs and interpretive resources. • In years 1 and 2, the evaluator will administer a pre-survey or interviews ahead of trainings, as well as post-surveys and interviews to measure impact of staff trainings. Training topics will be selected based on feedback from staff, as well as in relation to upcoming exhibitions and programming so the training is as relevant and timely as possible.
	Example: Every six months, our Project Director will assess the fit between our proposed Schedule of Completion and actual activity completion dates. *Example: Each quarter, each project partner will submit to our Project Director a templated report showing their progress on meeting project milestones.*
Timeliness: The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe	• Each quarter, the project director will review the budget and compare activities against the Schedule of Completion to ensure key milestones are met. When necessary, the project director will update timelines to ensure that all project activities are completed within the grant period. • Many project activities build upon prior phases, activities, and learnings, so the sequence of activities as outlined in the schedule of completion will help ensure project activities stay on track. • The Evaluator has provided an outline of her work with established deliverables both for herself and Walker staff, which will ensure her work stays on schedule. • Bimonthly, the project team will meet with the Evaluator to ensure that work is progressing and key milestones are being met.