



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-256111-OMS-24
Project Category: Lifelong Learning

Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$224,143
Amount of cost share:	\$243,952

The Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine will expand their programming to support Maine public schools' efforts to integrate African American and Ethnic Studies and Wabanaki Studies curricula as mandated by state law. The museum will collaborate with local organizations, and a diverse group of artists, musicians, performers, and storytellers to develop on-site and outreach programs that directly align with new curricula requirements and center community voices. The museum will also create professional development opportunities for Maine educators to increase their capacity to implement new curricula requirements. In addition to new programs, public school curricula, and professional development for educators, the project will also result in the production of a new play adapted from a children's book written by an author from the represented communities.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Performance Measurement Plan

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



Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine: Proposal Narrative ***Centering Black, Brown, and Wabanaki Voices through Storytelling and the Arts***

The Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine (CMTM) respectfully requests \$224,143 to expand cultural programming and education that supports Maine public schools' efforts to integrate Black, Brown, and Wabanaki Studies into their curricula, as mandated by Maine State Law. CMTM's project will center Black, Brown, and Wabanaki voices through theatre, art, storytelling, and music programming both at CMTM and via touring outreach programs across the state, as well as through professional development opportunities for early childhood educators.

Project Justification

Which program goal and associated objective(s) of Museums for America will your project address?

CMTM's project aligns with the Lifelong Learning goal of the Museums for America grant program. This project will benefit children and teachers through cross-disciplinary programming developed for children, and professional development programming for educators. This project aligns strongly with two objectives of the Lifelong Learning Goal:

- **Objective 1.1:** This project creates early childhood, elementary school and professional development programs that center Black, Brown, and Wabanaki cultures through theatre, storytelling, music and art. These diverse learning experiences will be connected to school curriculums and early literacy.
- **Objective 1.3:** This project includes school programs, outreach, tours, and field trips to CMTM that support and complement the integration of Black, Brown, and Wabanaki studies into the Maine public school curriculum.

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

At CMTM, we set the stage for every child to imagine and learn through play. *Everyone* belongs at CMTM. In our 2024-2027 strategic plan, we prioritize anchoring our diversity and equity practices and fostering inclusive connections. By amplifying the Black, Brown, and Wabanaki voices of our community through theatre, storytelling, music, and art programs tied to two of our existing exhibits, we will provide schools and families in our community with much needed resources to connect with the culturally diverse history and background of the land we call Maine. Our strategic plan also seeks to link social-emotional learning across programs while nurturing program development and collaboration that honors educators' and artists' individuality. This project centers Black, Brown, and Wabanaki voices in program development and addresses the crucial social-emotional learning goals of self-awareness and social awareness through culturally responsive arts education platforms. Young learners, their caregivers of all ages, and teachers in the community will all benefit from learning experiences that are rooted in deeper cultural and social connections.

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

Maine is at once one of the whitest states in the nation, a state with a growing diversity of immigrants and refugees, and a region with a long and painful history of misrepresenting and harming Indigenous peoples. In Southern Maine, where CMTM is located, more than 1,000 asylum seekers have arrived in Portland since January of this year alone¹. Asylum seekers and refugees arrive to Maine from a variety of countries, but most

¹ Snider, Ari. "Maine's recent population growth comes entirely from new arrivals, Census data show." *Maine Public*, 2023.

come from areas where the population is predominantly Black and Brown, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Haiti.

Maine's current population is also characterized by a dramatic loss of its original Indigenous peoples through wars, disease, and genocide resulting from European colonization. Although the land we now call Maine was once entirely populated by the Wabanaki Confederacy, today just 2.5% of Maine's population is identified as "American Indian." Here in Cumberland County that measure is just 0.3%.

These two phenomena, an influx of Black and Brown immigrants in Southern Maine and a loss of Maine's original Wabanaki population, have created a critical moment for empathy-building and social-emotional learning in our youngest citizens. Maine law requires that both [Wabanaki history and culture](#)² and "[African American and Ethnic Studies](#)"³ be taught in all elementary and secondary schools. At the same time, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#)⁴ 95% of Maine teachers are white and none are required to take Wabanaki or Black and Brown Studies courses during their training.

In 2022, the ACLU of Maine, along with the Abbe Museum and the Wabanaki Alliance, conducted a [study](#)⁵ that found that "the Wabanaki Studies Law is not meaningfully enforced around the state; school districts have failed to consistently and appropriately include Wabanaki Studies in their curriculum; and teacher training and professional development remain insufficient to equip educators to teach Wabanaki Studies." In the [recommendations](#)⁶ to the Maine Department of Education on the integration of African American Studies into American History Education, a committee of state teachers identified the continued need for more teacher education, professional development, and curriculum resources in order to meet the mandates of the state law.

CMTM is in a unique position to address these intertwining and complex challenges by supporting an increase in interactive cultural education focused on empathy-building at Maine public preschools and elementary schools. Our two existing exhibits⁷ on the Wabanaki peoples and Black heritage, developed in partnership with local experts and leaders, have created a strong foundation for us to build upon. We are confident that we can support students and teachers by celebrating the cultures of the newest student arrivals to our state while also centering the history of those who have inhabited these lands for centuries. Given that Wabanaki and Black and Brown studies are required by law to be taught in Maine, we can support schools in the region in ensuring this happens effectively.

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

The target group for CMTM's project is public school children (preschool-4th grade) and public school educators in Maine in low to moderate income districts. CMTM has identified over 100 elementary schools within an hour's drive of our facility where greater than 50% of children are financially eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. This represents 30,000 children. Within this group, we plan to reach 2,500 students and 300+ teachers multiple times over the course of the project, with a total student attendance of 5,000 across all events and programs. In 2022, CMTM conducted an Early Childhood listening tour⁸ and reached out to

² "An Act to Require Teaching of Maine Native American History and Culture in Maine's Schools." 120th Maine Legislature, 1991.

³ "An Act To Integrate African American Studies into American History Education." 130th Maine Legislature, 2021.

⁴ "NTPS State Dashboard: Maine." National Center for Education Statistics, 2020-21.

⁵ "The Wabanaki Studies Law: 21 Years After Implementation." ACLU of Maine, 2022.

⁶ "Collection and Development of Resource Materials and Best Practices for Teaching African American Studies and Maine African American Studies." Maine Department of Education, 2022.

⁷ Exhibit photos can be found in "Supportingdoc1."

⁸ CMTM's Early Childhood Listening Tour report can be found in "Supportingdoc2."

preschool educators, elementary teachers, and principals. The results showed that teachers and schools were looking for deeper social-emotional learning education as well as theatrical arts education. All participants had significant budget restrictions, highlighting the need for free or significantly reduced fees to participate in CMTM programs.

Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?

The beneficiaries of this project include our target groups, as well as all visitors to CMTM. All of the in-house performances and programs related to this project will be open to all CMTM visitors, which means that all visitors can benefit and learn from this programming. In fiscal year 2023, we welcomed over 200,000 visitors to CMTM. Of those visitors, only 4,600 were part of school group visits. In addition to highlighting the need for more resources for school group visits, this number also tells us that we can expect to count around 200,000 beneficiaries of this project per year, in addition to those in the target group. Black, Brown, and Wabanaki artists are also beneficiaries of this project. They have been intimately involved in developing the relevant existing exhibits, and will be an integral part of planning and implementing the programming that will expand the impact of those exhibits. There will be approximately 38-42 Black, Brown, and Wabanaki artists involved in this project.

Project Work Plan

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

CMTM's project comprises three major program activities: 54 programs and performances that will take place at the Museum & Theatre through years one-three; 150 outreach programs and performances that will take place at public schools through years one-three; and ten professional development opportunities for Maine educators with Wabanaki focused professional development in year one and two, and Black studies in years two and three. All three of these activities aim to center Black, Brown, and Wabanaki voices through storytelling and the arts. These programs are also all meant to deepen the learning experiences of Beautiful Blackbird and Ckuwaponahkiyik Atkuhkakonol, our two exhibits focused on these topics, which were co-developed with Black, Brown, and Wabanaki community partners.

Ashley Bryan's Beautiful Blackbird Exhibit is designed to engage diverse audiences, explore the perspective that "black is beautiful" and "difference is beautiful," and encourage creative self-expression, foster listening to others, and enable the sharing of stories. Ckuwaponahkiyik Atkuhkakonol: Wabanaki Storytelling Through Art and Traditions is our newest exhibit and centers the integration of visual arts and storytelling in Wabanaki cultural practices, and was designed with a team of artists representing the four tribal nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy. To expand the impact of these two exhibits, CMTM will implement the following activities:

Performances at CMTM

Audience reached: Maine school groups (preschool-4th grade) and public visitors (ages 3-10 & their families)
Maddy's Theatre at CMTM is specifically designed for immersive and interactive performances for audiences of fewer than 100 people. Performers will often interact directly with audience members, and children are encouraged to use their creativity and imagination during these interactive experiences. These moments of personal involvement can lead to a deeper emotional connection and a more memorable experience; in fact, the more hands-on and participatory the experience, the more likely it will become a core memory and [inspire future actions](#)⁹. These performances will include:

⁹ "Arts Education and Social-Emotional Learning Outcomes Among K-12 Students: Developing a Theory of Action." University of Chicago Consortium on School Research and Ingenuity, May 2019.

- Ongoing music and storytelling performances featuring Black, Brown, and Wabanaki artists aimed at children preschool-aged through grade four. The performances will focus on school group visits but also be open to all visitors at CMTM. Wabanaki performances will include artists representing all four nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy (Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Penobscot, and Passamaquoddy), and will include traditional and contemporary songs, stories, puppet performances, book readings, and more. Black and Brown performances for schools will be selected with our partners and will include musicians, dancers, and storytellers.
- A new mainstage theatrical production for young audiences featuring a Black or Brown author, playwright, director, and actors. CMTM will commission a play that will be workshopped through a new play development process and will be fully produced as part of our 2025 season.

Outreach and touring programs to Maine schools

Audience reached: Maine public elementary schools (preschool-4th grade)

Building on the success of past and current outreach programs and theatre tours¹⁰, CMTM will bring a touring series of arts and literacy based programs centering Black, Brown, and Wabanaki artists and performers to early childhood education centers around the state, including preschools, kindergarten and first grade classrooms. These 30-minute programs will include music, theatre and art and will connect Black, Brown, and Wabanaki artists and performers with schools, including:

- A tour of the theatrical production of the book *Beautiful Blackbird*, already developed by the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, geared toward early childhood audiences. CMTM would bring this play to pre-k, kindergarten, and first grade classrooms for the duration of the 2024-2025 school year.
- Development and implementation of an interactive musical interpretation of Ashley Bryan's *Beautiful Blackbird* story, built from the themes of CMTM's exhibit, which will tour to preschool-grade 1 and directly support the Black and Brown studies curriculum.
- A new Wabanaki studies outreach program to be developed and implemented, built from the themes of CMTM's Wabanaki exhibit, which will tour to grades 2-4 and directly support the Wabanaki curriculum.

Professional development for Maine teachers

Audience reached: Maine preschool-grade 4 educators

To help address the gaps in training and representation of Black, Brown, and Wabanaki voices in Maine public school curricula, CMTM will work directly with partners to develop a professional development series tied to both Black, Brown, and Wabanaki curricula for an estimated 140+ Maine teachers of preschool through grade four. Our Director of Education and Exhibits has [experience](#)¹¹ producing and hosting professional development for teachers and will manage this project component. We will work with our partners in these communities to identify existing opportunities that could be broadcast to a wider audience, previously developed concepts that can be expanded upon, and new opportunities that can be co-presented. In years one and two, we will be working with Wabanaki partners to develop a series of five professional development opportunities. In years two and three, professional development coordination with our Black and Brown studies partners will result in five sessions for teachers. Centering the work of Black, Brown, and Wabanaki partners is a necessity of hosting these sessions and will be created in coordination with them. Sessions might include:

- Panel discussions: "Stories Are at the Heart of Our Work: Wabanaki Storytelling and Wabanaki Studies," "Beautiful Blackbird Early Literacy: Exploring 'Black is Beautiful' with preschool audiences"

¹⁰ Photos of past CMTM theatre tours and educational outreach programming can be found in "Supportingdoc1."

¹¹ Kelly, Starr. "Towards Decolonizing Education." Maine Department of Education, 2021.

- Workshops: “Early Childhood Education and Wabanaki Studies,” “Early Childhood Education and Black and Brown Studies”
- Presentations: “Colonial Entanglements in Maine: Dams Construction and Wabanaki Studies,” “Colonial Entanglements in Maine: Maps and Understanding of Place”

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

The most significant risk to the project is scheduling alignment. This project will take significant coordination between partners, artists and schools—all of whom have interest in this project but varying schedules. CMTM plans to mitigate this risk in two ways—first by setting up school visits as early as possible, and second by working with a wide variety of artists to have broad availability for programs.

Another risk to this project is the job economy. Hiring staff in Maine’s job market can take time and significant recruitment effort. CMTM is working to mitigate this with comprehensive wage and salary audits to stay ahead of the curve for pay and benefits while dedicating existing staff time to recruitment.

Maine is a difficult state for actors to make a living, with only three year-round professional theaters. Casting the ideal actors willing to dedicate their time and talent to children’s theatre may be challenging. We will work to overcome these barriers by working closely with Indigo Arts Alliance and other partners who can connect us to Black and Brown artists, and ensuring that our pay for actors is competitive with other theaters in our state.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

CMTM staff leads for this project are Deputy Director Lucia Stancioff (project management and evaluation), Director of Education and Exhibits Starr Kelly (Wabanaki program and professional development focus), and Theatre Artistic Director Reba Askari (Beautiful Blackbird performing arts and onsite theatre focus). Additional CMTM staff members that will be involved in the implementation of the project include Theatre Production Manager Emily Dixon, Theatre Program Associate Nathan Lapointe (Beautiful Blackbird outreach focus), Education Program Manager Brittany Liscord (outreach and evaluation focus), and Education Program Associate Lauren Grant (outreach focus). Executive Director Julie Pezzino will play a role in overseeing the project and partnerships from a strategic leadership standpoint. We will also work with leadership from our long-time partners, Indigo Arts Alliance, Maine Roads to Quality, I’m Your Neighbor Books, and several other community partners, including Passamaquoddy musician and storyteller, Dwayne Tomah.

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

The primary resource needed to accomplish this project is relationship building and coordination of programming time between CMTM staff and the artists and schools we will work with. CMTM has foundational relationships with over 50% of the artists we plan to work with, and will partner with local organizations such as Indigo Arts Alliance who have relationships with additional artists. This project requires funds to support the significant contributions of Black, Brown and Wabanaki artists: from playwrights to theatre designers to storytellers and musicians, CMTM seeks to work with approximately 40 partners, artists and storytellers through contracts. CMTM will hire 16 part-time temporary staff members totaling 2,165 hours over the course of the project as actors and technical support for the touring and mainstage productions.

This project requires 8,407 hours of non-temporary staff time from project management to implementation, including time for booking and greeting group visits and tours. In addition, due to the nature of this work across our large state, travel costs both for artists visiting CMTM and for our staff to reach schools will be significant. Lastly, this project will have materials fees. These materials will primarily support the theatre productions and

the touring outreach interactives. Resources to create these exist onsite as CMTM has a full fabrication shop and contracts with designers who work offsite.

These personnel costs and contracts would not be possible without funding. CMTM seeks less than half of the cost from IMLS in resources to support this project, and intends to match the remaining costs with additional dollars including donor support focused on making school visits and outreaches more accessible.

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

The project director will be responsible for evaluation oversight with support from the education and theatre team directors and managers. Using surveys, interviews, and observational measurements, we will analyze each program's impact at the beginning, middle and end of its run. If midway evaluations demonstrate that a program isn't meeting its intended impact, that feedback will be shared with the program developers so adjustments can be made. Survey questions and programmatic evaluation styles will be age-appropriate and culturally responsive, and will be reviewed by teachers and partners prior to their use.

Through pre- and post-program surveys, teachers will report on observed learning in classrooms, how their connection to artists and storytellers changed over the course of the project, and how their confidence and comfort level approaching the subject has changed over time. Teacher satisfaction surveys will measure how they believe the program is working for them and their students, including specifically addressing how well the programs connect to their classroom's content and curriculum goals. The CMTM education team will also create takeaway assessment activities, which teachers can lead as in-class activities to foster class discussion and observe student perspective or attitude shifts. School audiences at onsite and touring theatre productions will be observed by CMTM staff, measuring stay time, reactions and engagement during shows.

Artists will participate in pre- and post-project evaluations called empathy surveys to measure the centering of Black, Brown, and Wabanaki voices and the emotional comfort of artists in program development and implementation. Purely quantitative measures will also be used to track progress toward goals, including recording attendance numbers to measure students, number of teachers, number of Black, Brown, and Wabanaki artists and partners, and number of visitors reached through these programs.

Project Results

What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified? How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the target group change as a result of your project?

This project seeks to:

1) **Significantly deepen students' Black, Brown, and Wabanaki cultural learning experiences by adding experiential programming and professional development layers connecting to school curricula.** The primary result is advancing knowledge for Maine students from early childhood to 4th grade by supporting Maine schools' efforts to integrate Black, Brown, and Wabanaki Studies into their curricula. The layered approach of onsite visits at CMTM, outreach programs at schools, and professional development for teachers ensures a meaningful and perspective-shifting learning experience for students, who can have ongoing, deeper conversations. This directly meets the needs of Maine public schools, which are mandated by law to teach Black, Brown, and Wabanaki studies to Maine students, yet do not have the full training to do so. Black, Brown, and Wabanaki studies are also crucial for students to become engaged citizens. Project effectiveness will consider any attitude change over time a success, with the goal of 50% of all teachers reporting significant attitude change for themselves and/or their students.

2) Diversify the perspective of storytelling in children’s museums and schools by centering Black, Brown, and Wabanaki artists and voices. Directly addressing the lack of diversity in Maine’s teaching staff, this project will increase representation of Black, Brown, and Wabanaki voices that students experience and interact with as part of their studies. With increased exposure to diverse voices through programs and professional development, this project will also foster inclusive connections between teachers and Black, Brown, and Wabanaki artists, performers, and presenters. This project will show an increased level of connection for at least 75% of teachers participating in professional development and at least 40% of teachers participating in outreach and onsite programs.

3) Center social-emotional learning

Finally, by starting with our youngest students, this project shares stories centering Black, Brown, and Wabanaki culture with preschool children and older, normalizing connection with Black, Brown, and Wabanaki arts within schools for children from their earliest years. These programs will be designed with social-emotional learning as a top priority, focusing on [CASEL's](#)¹² social-emotional learning goal of social-awareness through culturally responsive arts education platforms. As a direct result, CMTM’s project will nurture empathy in its target group and encourage children and teachers to make connections with people from other backgrounds. Success for this project would be indicated by a significant increase in classroom conversation centered on and teacher confidence in teaching Wabanaki and Black and Brown studies in schools

What products will result from your project?

- A new play for young audiences adapted by a Black or Brown playwright and based on a book by a Black or Brown author will be available for other children’s theaters to produce and perform the title.
- Professional Development curricula and recordings that can be utilized by public school educators.
- New outreach programs, including curricula and materials, that can be used by CMTM in collaboration with schools.

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

The work of this project is intimately linked to CMTM’s values and strategic plan priorities and as such will continue long after the specific activities of this project are completed. The Wabanaki exhibit, for example, is a permanent part of the Museum & Theatre, and will be part of the CMTM experience indefinitely. Implementing programming related to the Wabanaki exhibit will also be part of our work for the foreseeable future.

Similarly, CMTM plans to host programs and events highlighting black and brown cultures indefinitely, so Black and Brown authors will continue to be featured and celebrated annually. And although the Beautiful Blackbird exhibit will eventually feature a different book than *Beautiful Blackbird*, the featured book will always be by a diverse author and the exhibit will always seek to center and celebrate diverse stories and experiences.

Most importantly, we will continue to build our partnerships and steward the strengthened relationships we will have with our partners as a result of this project. We will actively fundraise to continue paying consultants from Black, Brown, and Wabanaki communities to continue the programming associated with the Beautiful Blackbird and Wabanaki storytelling exhibits.

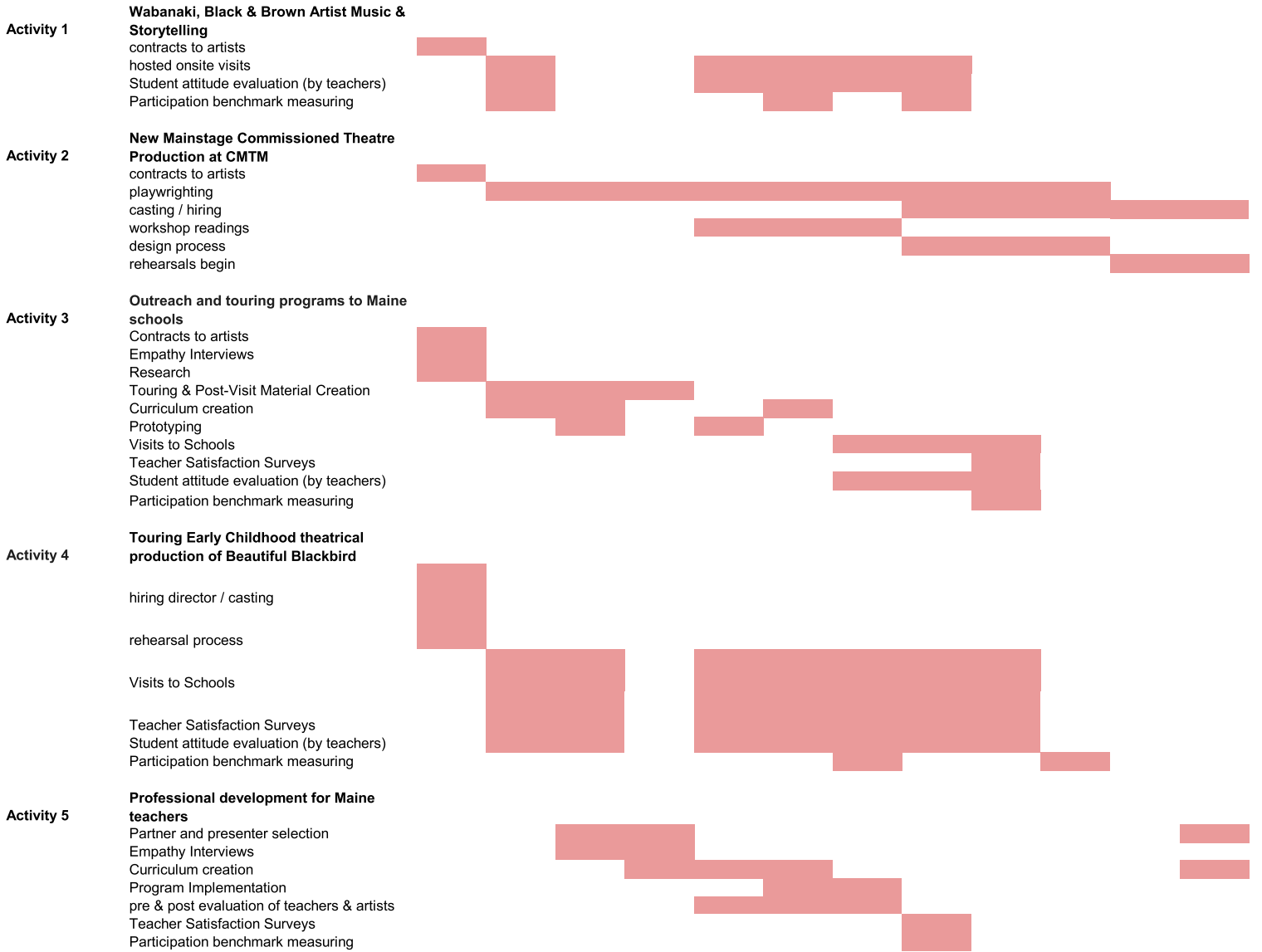
¹² “What is the CASEL Framework?” Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2021.



Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine Schedule of Completion Centering Black, Brown, and Wabanaki Voices through Storytelling and the Arts

Year 1

Sep 24 Oct 24 Nov 24 Dec 24 Jan 25 Feb 25 Mar 25 Apr 25 May 25 Jun 25 Jul 25 Aug 25





Children’s Museum & Theatre of Maine: Performance Measurement Plan

Applicant Name: Children’s Museum & Theatre of Maine

Project Title: *Centering Black, Brown, and Wabanaki Voices through Storytelling and the Arts*

Performance Measure	Data We Will Collect	Source of Our Data	Method We Will Use	Schedule
<p>Effectiveness: The extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results</p>	<p>At each activity, attendance counts will be recorded in our database. Every other month, while an activity has active participants, the CMTM project director will run reports to assess participation against the total intended number. Success will be based on how well we have met or exceeded target audience reach. Every six months we will count the number of Wabanaki and Black and Brown individuals centered in programs and performances that each grade level has the opportunity to connect to.</p> <p>During each onsite performance, audiences will be observed for levels of engagement.</p> <p>Post school visit or outreach, teachers will be asked to observe student perspectives and social-emotional attitudes of social awareness in relation to Black, Brown, and Wabanaki studies. This qualitative data collection will be asking teachers about observed conversations or questions students are bringing up after the workshops they participate in. Teachers will report on the depth of conversation, the quantity of conversations and questions asked, and will give qualitative reports on student perspective and comments made that pertain to the project.</p> <p>Before and after each professional development opportunity, surveys will be used to record teacher’s self-reported confidence approaching Black and Brown and Wabanaki studies with students. At the middle and end of the project, we will measure teacher, artist, and presenter self-reported levels of connection to one another.</p> <p>Teacher satisfaction surveys will be completed each semester per activity.</p>			
<p>Efficiency: How well resources are used and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group</p>	<p>We assess our spending on a monthly basis with review from both internal management and a board finance committee. We will look at our spending on this project at that time, with focus on ensuring the costs for each activity are not exceeding budget.</p> <p>Teams (i.e. theatre, education) will do internal reviews of their time spent on the project, tracking their hours and those of temporary staff against our benchmarks of student and teacher reach for years 1-3.</p>			



<p>Quality: How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group</p>	<p>We will measure quality through three formats::</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Surveys: Teacher satisfaction surveys are currently one of our most important tools in gaining insight and feedback into programs and professional development, and we will utilize these surveys regularly for touring programs and professional development so we can compile feedback and make real-time adjustments in program implementation based on opinion if needed. 2) Audience engagement: In theatre performances and other interactive workshops and tours, we can measure engagement through observational measures such as stay time, clapping, and questions asked. 3) Partner evaluation: Starting with empathy surveys before we begin, after six months, and again at the mid-way point of the project, we will regularly interview our key partners and artists. It is hugely important to the success of this work that these individuals assess the program we are inviting them to participate in as fostering connections to students and teachers while elevating their voices.
<p>Timeliness: The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe</p>	<p>The timing of this project aligns with our 2024-2027 strategic plan, oversight of which is directed by CMTM's Executive Director and board Executive Committee. Between these individuals and the project director (CMTM's Deputy Director), we will utilize both our strategic plan benchmark dates as well as the proposed schedule of completion for this project to evaluate our progress every six months and track if any project components are delayed.</p>

