



Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Sample Application MH-256270-OMS-24

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$172,000
Amount of cost share:	\$172,000

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History will create leadership programs for emerging museum professionals. These opportunities will include an Executive Leadership Fellowship and a Collections and Archives Fellowship. For the Executive Leadership Fellowship, staff will consult with experienced arts leaders to research and design the fellowship framework. The Collections and Archives Fellow will assist in the management of the museum's collection as well as exhibition planning. Staff will also launch training modules for cross-departmental training for graduate student fellows as well as provide professional training for museum professionals across the country.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

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

Narrative

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

Investing in Museum Leadership Programs: Building a Path for Capacity & Impact

Project Justification

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

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History requests \$500,000 for its project, *Building Museum Leadership Programs: A Path for Capacity & Impact*. Our project will address IMLS' second goal and support the growth and development of museum professionals. The first associated objective that we plan to address is to develop and implement fellowship programs that support emerging professionals entering the museum field. The second associated objective is to create learning and growth opportunities that build our internal teams' skills but also create a path for enhanced knowledge and opportunities to share expertise for the field.

In addition, our proposed project, and the potential partnership with IMLS, also aligns with two of the three agency-level goals and their key objectives. Our project will champion lifelong learning and support training and professional development of museum staff and advance shared knowledge and learning opportunities for all. It will also advance collections stewardship and access for upwards of 65,000 items within The Wright Museum's collections and archives.

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.

Historically underfunded, yet traditionally creative in the deployment of resources for dynamic exhibitions and programs, The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History is known for its leadership and vision in launching and supporting the build out of the African American Museum field. In 1965, Dr. Charles H. Wright, along with determined and visionary colleagues across the country, envisioned the importance of first voice institutions dedicated to African American history, and implemented activities and founded organizations to meet the need. Now, almost 60 years later, The Wright is a keeper of stories that struggle for narrative power and tell of a lived experience largely untold, under told, or misrepresented in the world around us. The Wright's footprint has had ripple effects throughout the field. In addition to serving as a reference for many first voice cultural institutions, The Wright has been a home for countless artists, curators, administrators, designers, some who launched their career at the institution. It has been a long-time resource for community driven activities in Detroit. Yet it is also a testament to the potential for an arts and cultural institution to survive economic, social, and climate conditions, and still have locally rooted national and global impact. In the current era of post-covid reconstruction, The Wright finds itself at a critical crossroads, and has entered a significant period of its institutional lifecycle.

Just over four years ago the Wright had an operating deficit of over \$1 million and notwithstanding the efforts of many internal and external stakeholders, knew that it would not be able to sustain operations in the long-term, but hoped to find an eventual solution. Notably, it wasn't just The Wright who was faced with the long-term crisis of running an organization at or above scale. Cultural organizations the world over struggle with the realities of running state of the art cultural institutions. For The Wright, deferred maintenance became a significant issue, with a price tag of almost 30 million dollars. The pandemic closed doors for months and all earned income from rentals admission, memberships ceased and then returned at a reduced rate. The organization furloughed 2/3 of its staff. And subsequently, at the same

time, heavy rains on two occasions would cause Detroit's sewage system to back up into the building depositing four feet of water on our first floor where the bulk of our collection was housed. Fortunately, with the early prediction of heavy unprecedented rain the leadership team moved the collection out of the building to offsite storage the night before the rain started. Still, our first-floor storage facility exhibition design studio and offices were ruined.

Yet, in October of 2019, The Wright would be named by the Ford Foundation as one of America's Culture Treasures a designation that would be accompanied by an unrestricted operating grant. The grant is of particular significance as it recognizes 20 organizations without whom our nation's cultural landscape would be irreparably changed. This funding generated an additional gift by philanthropist, Mackenzie Scott. And while the grants represented approximately 18 months of our operating budget, they also represented breathing room and possibility. As The Wright began our assessment of what it means to build a path towards financial sustainability, we recognized the incredible importance of investing in the human resources and professional development needed to operate arts and cultural institutions. Like the vision that represented our founding, we discovered that our internal needs and institutional experience was a microcosm and representative of the internal needs of our colleagues, peers, and the field.

Over the next three years, it is critical that The Wright invest in leadership and staff who can collaboratively lead the institution through an intense period of change while building the infrastructure and path for sustainability. The infrastructure needed is both from a human resource lens, as well as tangible attention to our collections and archives. As the keeper of stories, we must understand who we are as leaders, what our museum offers to the public, and how we best operate for the progression of our institution and the field at large. The investment we envision, through this proposal of partnership with IMLS, requires a specific and strategic approach that addresses traditional museum needs around our collections and archives, and considers the ancillary but critical roles that ensure a museum operates well (executive leadership, development, operations, facilities management, marketing, guest services, public programs, membership, administrative, etc.). Through the vision of our President and CEO, the executive leadership team, and key staff, we recognize an opportunity to build leadership-related programs that strengthen our internal capacity, and serves as a model and offer key learnings to the field. We've assessed this need through current executive experience, board service in the field, as a cohort member of America's Cultural Treasures, and through internal conversations amongst leadership and the broader staff.

Our project proposes to address the above needs through a strategic three-pronged approach.

1. Build an Executive Leadership Fellowship that engages emerging professionals who have identified that they would like to sit in executive leadership positions
2. Build a two-year Collections and Archives Fellowship that supports key initiatives for collections organizing and access
3. Launch an emerging leadership academy that supports internal training and offers external models for cross department leadership training.

We believe that there is an urgency to this work. First The Wright will celebrate its 60th anniversary and it is important that the institution is positioned to both communicate and share impact of strategic work regarding its path for sustainability. Most important however, is the social and political climate that actively seeks to erase or misconstrue African American history, and the contributions made in this country by Black people of the diaspora. Preparing our staff is prepared to operate at full capacity is essential. Ensuring collections are accessible and available is a key imperative. In addition to serving as a resource for children and youth, which was always Dr. Wright's vision, adults must be able to learn from all that we hold. African American stories and history add a critical piece to the American narrative. Our stories not only put our shared past in a more complete context but adds much needed clarity to our current moment of political, social and cultural uncertainty. So, it is important for The Wright, but also the field to build and sustain ourselves now and ensure that we are steady in the years and generations ahead.

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

We've identified four target groups for our project, all who have either contributed to this proposal directly, or in the case of external targets, will have the opportunity to work in collaboration. Our first target group is our leadership and staff of approximately 10 people who work directly or indirectly with our collections and archives. Our proposed fellowship program will support the efforts of this team to not only catalog and organize our collection, but to also work with colleagues outside of the department to create access and interaction with our collection through programming and marketing efforts.

Our second target group is our executive leadership team of five, who will work collaboratively to initiate and implement both the executive leadership fellow program, and our professional development activities. The proposed programs will support this team in overall management, but also create opportunities for external sharing and connection to the field. This is particularly the case for the President and CEO, our Senior Vice President of Exhibitions and Programming, and our Vice President of Organizational Development.

Our third target group for our project is our internal team of about 15 mid-level directors and managers who will participate in the Emerging Leadership Academy. Similar to our executive leadership team, this group's work will support internal operations, but leverage opportunities to share expertise and learnings with local, regional, and national peers and colleagues.

Finally, we envision our fourth target group to be external leaders within the field, established and emerging. First there are those who can support the piloting and research required to build or execute the fellowship programs (approximately 6-10 experts), and support any desired sharing with the field. For the Emerging Leaders Academy, we propose to open our training and development modules to other African American museums post our own learning and evaluation process in year two. This would serve 30 external mid-level managers/directors and key non-managerial staff identified by external African American Museums who, through succession planning have the potential to move into managerial and director roles within their institutions. Additionally, through our curatorial fellowship program, emerging leaders of color will gain necessary and insightful experience within the Wright's collections and archive department. Working alongside the museum's collections, archive and curatorial staff, these students will play a vital role in management of the Wright substantial collection of fine art, archival documents, and media – from cataloguing and processing to our efforts towards conservation and exhibition research and preparation.

Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?

The target groups noted above outline specific numbers of beneficiaries. In addition to those groups, we anticipate that this project would support a variety of museum professionals dedicated to working in African American institutions. Our two proposed fellowship programs will benefit emerging leaders who either want to participate, or who would be interested in modeling the type of fellowships we create within their own institution. For the Collections and Archives Fellowship, we believe that the improvement and access to our collections and archive will benefit the community at large, and particularly scholars, researchers, and teachers of all grades.

Project Work Plan

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

Starting in July 2024, The Wright will build upon current work to activate the proposed project of building our three leadership programs. Each program has a phased approach that spans over two years.

Executive Leadership Fellowship

Our goal is to implement an experiential hybrid online and in-person fellowship for mid-career executive leaders who have a stated interest in becoming executive leaders of African American focused (or BIPOC) institutions. While this fellowship would eventually pilot at The Wright during the end of a two-year period, support from IMLS would focus on the planning needed to create a comprehensive pilot model and framework for the field.



Phase One: July 2024 – December 2024

- Convene six experienced arts leaders who will research and design fellowship framework
- Conduct a comparative analysis of existing Emerging/Executive Leadership programs
- Determine how experiential programs build upon or stand-alone from current emerging programs
- Create a partnership and agreement with an institution of higher education

Phase Two: January 2025 – June 2025

- Conduct a compensation analysis to determine a financial model for placing fellows in African American (and/or BIPOC) institutions
- Build and launch a selection process for mentors and fellows
- Research and build criteria for certification
- Formalize executive leadership training in collaboration with an academic institution
- Formalize and finalize certification for fellow and potential employers

Phase Three: July 2025 – December 2025

- Recruit pilot institution(s) to join The Wright for fellowship co-hort one
- Finalize fellowship training and curriculum with partner institutions

Phase Four: January 2026 – June 2026

- Recruit and interview first fellowship candidates
- Launch and announce first fellow

Collections & Archives Fellowship

The Wright collections and archives has been organized, preserved and researched over decades, and currently houses over 75,000 two-and-three dimensional objects that catalog and tell rich stories of local to global African American history. With our entire collection returning to our campus following the previously referenced flooding, the Wright is eager and well-poised to reestablish our near fully rehabbed collection and archive facilities, while simultaneously reimagining possibilities for its use and deployment towards the advancement of our collective understanding of Detroit history and African American culture broadly. Our goal is to create a fellowship that supports the execution of a comprehensive audit and re-organization of our collections and archives. We also want our fellowship to support building a new acquisitions committee and launch increased access by the public.

Phase One: July 2024 – December 2024

- Recruit and hire fellow from local, regional or national graduate programs
- Prepare and execute orientation and training for The Wright's collection and archives
- Create and execute fellowship workplan
- Recruit acquisitions committee members
- Plan and mount a museum exhibit highlighting holdings from our collections

Phase Two: January 2025 – December 2025

- Revise and implement accession and collection policies
- Convene acquisitions committee members
- Research and implement digital technologies and strategies that facilitate collection organization and public access
- Evaluate progress and key activities needed for final six months



Phase Three: January 2026 – June 2026

- Continue cataloging and implementing policies
- Training on process and access
- Evaluate fellowship impact

Emerging Leadership Academy (ELA)

We intend to create an internal and external training program for mid-level and non-managerial employees to ensure we are developing leadership skills in all areas that are required to run a museum effectively. We also hope to invite emerging professionals into the institution and sector, who may have skills to offer outside of traditional artistic, programmatic, or curatorial experience, but have expertise in areas of finance, facilities management, operations, marketing, fundraising, organizational development. Our first year will focus on training for The Wright's current staff who are working as Directors and Managers. Our second year will open the same training to African American institutions in the region and across the country.

Phase One ELA Pre-Launch Training January 2024 – July 2024

- Training Module I – Introduction to Leadership – Developing Emotional Intelligence
- Training Module II – Basic Managerial Styles and Change Management
- Training Module III – Creating an Effective Team and Team Building Concepts
- Training Module IV – Transformative Leadership: Management to Leadership
- Training Module V - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
- Training Module VI – Team accountability, Coaching, and performance evaluation

Phase Two (Museum Operations): July 2024 – December 2024

- Training Module I – Understanding Nonprofit Financial Statements and Budgeting
- Training Module II – Process Improvement and KPI in Museum Service Delivery
- Training Module III – Facility Operations Overview, Sustainability, and Safety Considerations
- Training Module IV – Fund-raising/Development and Marketing
- Training Module V – Exhibitions and Museum Programming
- Training Module VI – Strategic and Long-term Planning

Phase Three Capstone Training – Project: January 2025 - April 2025

- Group project-based case study regarding Leadership Principles applied to Museum Operations
- Presentation of case studies and solutions & Executive Leadership Team feedback

Phase Four Evaluation: May 2025 – June 2025

- Evaluation of program by participants, presenters, and leaders
- Refinement of program for external participation

Phase Five ELA National Offering: July 2025 – June 2026

The ELA program will be offered to African American Museums nation-wide as a pilot program with two consecutive cohorts, participants will be nominated from their organizations and a selection process will determine the participants based on key criteria such as geographic, generational, and area of focus to ensure broad-based exchange of ideas and experience. Using a virtual model and collaborative technology, participants will undergo the training modules listed above. The participant level will be capped at 15 participants for each cohort to ensure the integrity of the program delivery and allow for full collaboration and active participation during the training sessions. The capstone presentations



will be in-person and Executive Leadership from each participating institution will be invited to attend and participate in the review panels.

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

The key risks to all three programs is time and resources. Often, day-to-day activities for a staff that is already at capacity, can make participating in professional development related activities a challenge. For the Collections and Archives fellow, time is related more to the urgent need to address our most fragile pieces who are vulnerable to climate impact (past, present, and future)

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

- Neil A. Barclay, President and CEO
- James Claiborne, SVP of Exhibitions and Programming
- Joy DeFrance, Vice President of Organizational Development
- Kelli Morgan, Ph.D, Senior Curator
- Michon Lartigue, SVP of Institutional Management (grant management)

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

The Wright is requesting \$350,000 to execute this project over a two-year period.

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

The Wright will utilize a series of traditional evaluation strategies and tactics throughout the period of engagement, all grounded by on-going assessment of the performance measurement plan. Evaluation and progress activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Work plan evaluations
- Listening sessions
- Formal evaluation surveys for participants, trainers, guest speakers
- Analysis of program benchmarks and measurements
- Participant attendance
- Participant completion rate
- Pre- and post-assessments of key areas of understanding of training modules
- Assessment of results (ie collections status, fellowship planning documents, etc.)

Project Results

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.

Our intended results will address infrastructure needs and support intensive professional development (planning and active training). We've designed our project to support our internal operations while also keeping a strategic lens on how our internal activities can support and build the field. Some of our key deliverables include:

- Pilot and model for recruitment of BIPOC leaders into executive management
- Comprehensive catalog of The Wright's updated collections and archive
- Re-envisioned policies, philosophies, and strategies for collections and archive
- Reinvigorated acquisitions committee
- Digital tools for organizing and access



- Training modules for the institution and field

In addition to those deliverables and results, there are indirect benefits that are critical for the current climate of society. The impact of our project's programs creates an infrastructure for both the field and those who visit The Wright. First, a highly trained staff who is operating with strong professional development experience will create stronger programs, operations, marketing, and resource development. This will fuel the institution, and the field with professionals who understand the impact and power of their work, and can connect their day-to-day to a larger and strategic vision. Second, in a time of reconstruction, and a narrative fight on the history of African Americans, The Wright can serve as a direct resource to combat erasure and support the build out of context for the importance of understanding history. Specifically, through the expertise of the Wright's education and curatorial staff and the range of scholars, artists and researchers that we engage through our exhibitions, programming and research programs, our museum's collections are deployed towards engaging the broader public's interest in African American, Detroit and U.S. and world history. Through our collective efforts, the Wright continues to cultivate a distinct space in the cultural landscape where history comes alive and is revealed as a relevant and necessary to a diverse and intergenerational audience of visitors, stakeholders from around the globe.

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

Our curatorial and programmatic teams will have a stronger ability to deliver dynamic and rich programming, due to the clear and organized nature of our collections. In addition, they, along with all internal leaders and staff, will benefit from the professional development work through the emerging leadership academy. Not only will our teams have improved knowledge of themselves and their colleagues, they will be able to envision practical application of skills with more confidence and clarity. This will also be the case for external leaders who participate in the Academy in year two.

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?

Since the aforementioned flooding incident, the Wright has undertaken considerable construction and renovations projects to ready our facilities for the ultimate return of our collection and archival holdings. It is also important to note the considerable new additions to our team in key positions including; Senior Vice President of Exhibitions and Programs, Senior Curator, Collections Manager, and a Digital Archivist. Considering these key factors, the Wright is uniquely positioned to better leverage, manage, research and make available the totality of our collections, records and archives. In particular, the collections fellow will be a key team member to advance and help inform our efforts to bring our collection fully in the 21st century through a comprehensive audit and cataloguing project.

What products will result from your project?

The Wright will have a hard copy and digital catalog of its collection and archives. We will also have comprehensive landscape analysis of the field as it relates to executive leadership and fellowship programs. We'll also have a training and development curriculum that can be shared with the field post pilot in year two.

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

The Wright has an extensive collection of art, historical objects, and other ephemera, and in this new chapter, post our project, we will continue to invest in resources and partnerships so that the works will always be available for future viewing, research and presentation. We plan to transform the collections and archive fellowship into a new position that would build and continue the work and new strategies for accession and descension.

For our leadership development work, we will benefit from the planning of the executive leadership fellowship by hosting the fellow at the end of the grant period, and building on the work both through collaboration with the field as well as internal partnerships that seek to continue to resource any fellowship programs. Finally, the work with the emerging leaders academy will continue through the leadership of our organizational development team.



Schedule of Completion

July 2024 – December 2024

Executive Leadership Fellowship

- Convene six experienced arts leaders who will research and design fellowship framework
- Conduct a comparative analysis of existing Emerging/Executive Leadership programs
- Determine how experiential programs build upon or stand-alone from current emerging programs
- Create a partnership and agreement with an institution of higher education

Collections & Archive Fellowship

- Recruit and hire fellow from local, regional or national graduate programs
- Prepare and execute orientation and training for The Wright's collection and archives
- Create and execute fellowship workplan
- Recruit acquisitions committee members
- Plan and mount a museum exhibit highlighting holdings from our collections

Emerging Leadership Academy (ELA)

- Training Module I – Understanding Nonprofit Financial Statements and Budgeting
- Training Module II – Process Improvement and KPI in Museum Service Delivery
- Training Module III – Facility Operations Overview, Sustainability, and Safety Considerations
- Training Module IV – Fund-raising/Development and Marketing
- Training Module V – Exhibitions and Museum Programming
- Training Module VI – Strategic and Long-term Planning

January 2025 – June 2025

Executive Leadership Fellowship

- Conduct a compensation analysis to determine a financial model for placing fellows in African American (and/or BIPOC) institutions
- Build and launch a selection process for mentors and fellows
- Research and build criteria for certification
- Formalize executive leadership training in collaboration with an academic institution
- Formalize and finalize certification for fellow and potential employers

Collections & Archive Fellowship

- Revise and implement accession and collection policies
- Convene acquisitions committee members
- Research and implement digital technologies and strategies that facilitate collection organization and public access
- Evaluate progress and key activities needed for final six months

Emerging Leadership Academy (ELA)

- Group project-based case study regarding Leadership Principles applied to Museum Operations



- Presentation of case studies and solutions & Executive Leadership Team feedback
- Evaluation of program by participants, presenters, and leaders
- Refinement of program for external participation

July 2025 – December 2025

Executive Leadership Fellowship

- Recruit pilot institution(s) to join The Wright for fellowship co-hort one
- Finalize fellowship training and curriculum with partner institutions

Collections & Archive Fellowship

- Revise and implement accession and collection policies
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January 2026 – June 2026

Executive Leadership Fellowship

- Recruit and interview first fellowship candidates
- Launch and announce first fellow

Collections & Archive Fellowship

- Continue cataloging and implementing policies
- Training on process and access
- Evaluate fellowship impact

Emerging Leadership Academy (ELA)

Same as above.