INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES

21st Century Museum Professionals Grant Program

Applicant Information Session

FY24 Video   December 2023

Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services informational video "21st Century Museum Professionals Grant Program Applicant Information Session."

My name is Mark Isaksen, one of the program staff in the Office of Museum Services at IMLS and I'll be narrating this presentation.

Introduction

The goal of this video is to provide an overview of our 21st Century Museum Professionals grant program – referred to as 21MP - and the process of preparing an application for funding.

Video Chapters

1. **Chapter 1**: What is the 21MP Grant Program?
2. **Chapter 2**: What can 21MP Grants Fund?
3. **Chapter 3**: Application Components - Overview
4. **Chapter 4**: Application Components - Narrative
5. **Chapter 5**: Application Components – Budget
6. **Chapter 6**: Application Tips and Next Steps

This video is organized into six chapters:

- What is 21MP? This introductory section explains the purpose and design of the grant program.
- What can 21MP Grants Fund? This section provides detail on the types of projects funded in this grant program and the amount of funds that can be requested.
- Application Components – Introduction. This section describes the types of documents that are needed to create a grant application.
- Application Components – Narrative. This section provides guidance on composing the narrative part of the application.
- Application Components – Budget. This section describes what to include in your project budget.
- Application Tips and Next Steps. The concluding section offers a few tips and next steps.

The complete set of instructions for how to prepare and submit a 21MP grant application are found in the Notice of Funding Opportunity published on Grants.gov and also available on the IMLS website.

Please refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the most detailed information to prepare your application.

- To get the most out of this video, we recommend that you watch it in its entirety, this will give you an understanding of the 21MP grant program, the types of projects that can be funded, and the necessary application components.
- You may also want to review the 21MP Notice of Funding Opportunity before, during and after you watch the video. Notices of Funding Opportunities, also known as NOFOs, are documents that detail the requirements of each of our grant programs for Fiscal Year 2024. All of our NOFOs can be found at imls.gov/grants
- As you navigate the application process, you can use this video as a reference tool. If you'd like to skip to a specific section, please use the time bar below, or the links in the description box, to navigate the chapters

What is the 21MP Grant Program?

In this section we will answer the question "What is the 21MP grant program?" providing information on the purpose and intent of this grant program and who it is designed to serve.

21MP Program

The 21st Century Museum Professionals (21MP) grant program advances the growth and development of a diverse workforce of museum professionals.

INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

FY 2022–2026
STRATEGIC PLAN
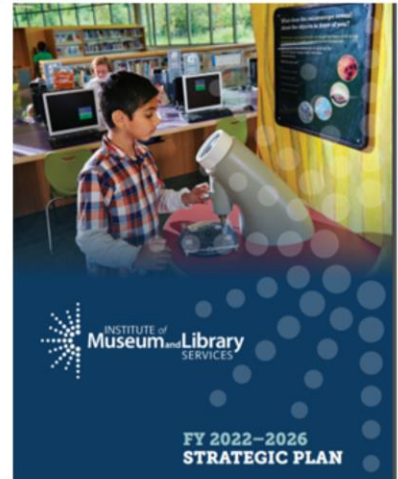
The 21st Century Museum Professionals (21MP) program provides grant funding opportunities to advance the growth and development of a diverse workforce of museum professionals.

The 21MP program fulfills a strategic objective for IMLS: to support the training and professional development of the museum and library workforce – which is listed in our agency strategic plan for 2022-2026.   IMLS is legislatively authorized to create and operate this grant program in 20 USC, Chapter 72 "Museum and Library Services", Subchapter III "Museum Services", Section 9175.

21MP Program supported projects

The 21MP program supports projects that:

- offer professional development to the current museum workforce;
- employ strategies to train and recruit future museum professionals;
- and support evaluation efforts to identify and share effective practices.

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21MP Program institutions

The 21MP program encourages applications from:

- museum associations,
- museum studies programs at institutions of higher education, and
- museums that serve as key parts of the professional learning and training environment.

IMLS recognizes the important role of strong local and regional networks as an essential tool for providing peer to peer learning, training and mentoring opportunities. The 21MP program encourages applications from museum associations, museum studies programs at institutions of higher education, and museums that serve as key parts of the professional learning and training environment.

21MP is for Museums

- **Museums must**
  - ✓ Have at least one full time or equivalent professional staff person, either paid or unpaid
  - ✓ Have a physical location that it owns or operates
  - ✓ Have been open to the public for at least 120 days in the year prior to the application deadline.
  - ✓ Own or use tangible objects
- **Museums may be stand-alone organizations, or they may be part of a larger institution, such as a college, university, Tribe, or a state or local government.**

Applicants to the 21MP program may include museums that serve as key parts of the professional learning and training environment.

Museums, like all applicants must meet certain requirements to be eligible for IMLS funding.
- Your organization must be located in one of the United States' 50 States, its Territories, or the District of Columbia
- Your organization must be a unit of State, local, or tribal government, or a private nonprofit organization with tax-exempt status

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

Museums must:
- Have at least one full time or equivalent professional staff person, either paid or unpaid
- Have a physical location that it owns or operates
- Have been open to the public for at least 120 days in the year prior to the application deadline.
- And own or use tangible objects

Museums may be stand-alone organizations, or they may be part of a larger institution, such as a college, university, Tribe, or a state or local government.

21MP is for Museum Associations

An organization or association that engages in activities designed to advance the well-being of museums and the museum profession;

Applicants in this eligibility category may be national, regional, state, or discipline-based associations or related organizations that primarily serve the museum field.

The 21MP program is also open to any organization or association that engages in activities designed to advance the well-being of museums and the museum profession. Applicants in this eligibility category may be national, regional, state, or discipline-based associations or related organizations that primarily serve the museum field

These organizations, like all applicants, must meet certain requirements to be eligible for IMLS funding.

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

21MP is for Higher Education

Institutions of Higher Education, including public and private non-profit universities or colleges.

- Museum Studies and related programs that support the training of museum professionals.

- Offering undergraduate, graduate, or professional and continuing education.

The 21MP program is also open to Institutions of Higher Education. An institution of higher education, includes public and nonprofit universities who may offer Museum Studies and related programs that support the training of museum professionals. These programs may be in the form of undergraduate, graduate, or professional and continuing education.

As an Institution of Higher Education, like other types of applicants, must meet certain requirements to be eligible for IMLS funding.
- Your organization must be located in one of the United States' 50 States, its Territories, or the District of Columbia
- Your organization must be a unit of State, local, or tribal government, or a private nonprofit organization with tax-exempt status

What Can 21MP Grants Fund?

In this section we will answer the question "What can 21MP Grants Fund?" providing details on the types of projects and associated goals within the 21st Century Museum Professionals grant program.

21MP Funds Projects

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

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

Like so many of the IMLS grant programs, the 21MP grants are intended to support project-based activities so let's take a minute to consider just exactly what that means.

The Project Management Institute has a good definition, which is "A temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result." They go on further to explain that a project is temporary because it has a defined beginning and end in time and therefore defined scope and resources.

And a project is unique in that it is not a routine operation but rather a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

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

What Makes a 21MP Project Successful?

INCLUSIVE APPROACH   IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE   AUDIENCE FOCUS   MEASURABLE RESULTS

With a solid grounding in project-based design, your project should also contain a few additional key characteristics that are essential in the 21MP program.

- **In-depth knowledge:** The project design reflects a thorough understanding of current practice related to training museum professionals.
- **Inclusive Approach**: The project employs inclusive strategies to reach target audiences at multiple institutions.
- **Audience Focus**: The project engages museums staff, leadership, and volunteers at any stage of career development.
- **Measurable results:** The project generates measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

Successful projects that exemplify all these four characteristics are likely to fit well within the 21MP grant program.

21MP Program Goal 1

Goal 1: Current Workforce

Support the professional development of the museum workforce, including those from diverse and under-represented backgrounds.

Now it's time to consider how your project aligns with the specific grant program goals and associated objectives.

Goal 1 is to support the professional development of the museum workforce, including those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. Projects that have a primary focus on the current museum workforce are aligned with this goal.

21MP Program Goal 1 Objectives

Goal 1: Current Workforce

Objective 1.1: develop new or enhanced professional development and training programs for the museum workforce.

Objective 1.2: support assessment and evaluation of training and professional development programs to identify and share effective practices.

Supporting the goal 1 focus on the current workforce of museum professionals, are two associated objectives.   You can select one or both of these objectives.

- Objective 1.1: is to develop new or enhanced professional development and training programs for the museum workforce. This objective applies to any project that is creating a new training program or expanding and enhancing an existing training program with a target audience of the current museum workforce. The target audience can be for people at any stage of their career (early, emerging, experienced, senior)

- Objective 1.2: is to support assessment and evaluation of training and professional development programs to identify and share effective practices. This objective is essential for those projects that will be conducting rigorous evaluation and assessment of training programs, to analyze and distill those results, and share findings with relevant and interested sectors of the museum field and professional training and higher education ecosystem.

21MP Program Goal 2

Goal 2: Future Workforce

Recruit and train future museum professionals, including those from diverse and under-represented backgrounds.

Now, let's look at the second program goal for 21MP.

Goal 2 is for projects that will recruit and train future museum professionals, including those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. Projects aligned with this goal will have a primary audience focus on the future workforce.

21MP Program Goal 2 with Objectives

Goal 2: Future Workforce

Objective 2.1: increase the number of students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds enrolled in graduate and undergraduate museum-related programs.

Objective 2.3: recruit future museum professionals from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds through paid internships, mentoring, and fellowship opportunities.

Objective 2.3: support assessment and evaluation of recruitment, training and higher education programs to identify and share effective practices.

Supporting the goal 2 focus on the future workforce of museum professionals, are three associated objectives.   You can select one or more of these objectives.

- Objective 2.1: is to increase the number of students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds enrolled in graduate and undergraduate museum-related programs. This objective connects to projects that directly involve museum studies or related programs at institutions of higher education.

- Objective 2.3: recruit future museum professionals from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds through paid internships, mentoring, and fellowship opportunities. This objective aligns with projects that focus on the recruit, placement and retention of people entering the museum field, and may involve activities such as paid internships, mentorship opportunities, or other activities that foster the connections between training and professional development and higher education students and job opportunities in the museum field.

- Objective 2.3: support assessment and evaluation of recruitment, training and higher education programs to identify and share effective practices. This objective is essential for those projects that will be conducting rigorous evaluation and assessment of programs focused on the future workforce.   This can be focused on evaluating new programs or conducting retrospective or longitudinal analysis of existing programs, and to share findings with relevant and interested sectors of the museum field and professional training and higher education ecosystem.

What Size Are 21MP Projects?

21MP project budgets can range in size.

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

Scale your budget request to the needs of your project.

Regardless of the program goal selected, all 21MP project budgets must stay within a specific range of funding in this grant program. Your project budget can request a minimum of $100,000 to a maximum of $500,000 in federal funds. Keep your budget aligned to the scope and scale of your project and include all costs necessary to complete the proposed activities.

In this grant program, all project budgets are required to have at least a 1:1 non-federal cost share. Here are three examples to illustrate that point:

- If your TOTAL project budget was $200,000 you would be able to request $100,000 in federal grant funds and provide a cost-share of at least $100,000.

- if your TOTAL project budget was $500,000 you would be able to request $250,000 in federal grant funds and provide a cost-share of at least $250,000.

- if your TOTAL project budget was $1,000,000 you would be able to request $500,000 in federal grant funds and provide a cost-share of at least $500,000.

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

Application Components

Overview

In this section we will introduce the components of a 21MP grant application, and provide an overview about the required, conditionally required, and supporting documents.

Application Components

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

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

The 21MP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) includes a complete list of all the application components. Most of these components are created by applicants and saved as a PDF for uploading as part of your application package in Grants.gov.

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

Required Documents

These components are required of all applications.

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424S)
- IMLS Supplementary Information Form
- Organizational Profile
- Narrative (7 pages max.)
- Schedule of Completion
- Performance Measurement Plan
- IMLS Budget Form
- Budget Justification
- List of Key Project Staff and Consultants
- Resumes

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

Also important to note there is a 7-page limit for the narrative. If you exceed the page limit specified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, we must remove the extras before your application goes out for review. So, make sure your content fits into the page limits specified and make sure the number of pages holds when you convert your document to a PDF.

Conditionally Required Documents

These components are required of <u>some</u> applications.

- Proof of Private, Nonprofit Status
- Final Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Digital Products Plan

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

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

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

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

Supporting Documents

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

- Letters of commitment from partners, consultants, or any third-parties you will work with on your project
- Bibliography or references relevant to your proposed project design or evaluation strategy
- Letters of support from experts and stakeholders
- Needs assessments identifying knowledge gaps and areas of growth for the target group

- Recruitment plans showing proposed outreach strategies for the target group
- Learning objectives and/or curriculum for a proposed training program.
- Logic models, assessment strategies or evaluation frameworks.
- Reports from planning activities
- Products or evaluations from similar projects
- Web links to relevant online materials

The third group of application components is Supporting Documents. Supporting documents are optional. You may submit some or none. Include only those items that will supplement your proposal. This is not the place to introduce brand new information, rather, it's an opportunity to provide documents that support your project justification, project work plan and project results (from your narrative) as well as your budget justification.

For example, have you identified a partner or consultant whose involvement is key to the project's success? If so, a letter of support or commitment would go a long way to reassuring reviewers that they are 'on board' and the project will succeed.

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

Application Components

In the following sections of this presentation, we will focus on two application components:

- Narrative
- Budget

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

In the following sections of this presentation, we will focus on these application components:
- Narrative
- Budget

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

Application Components

Narrative

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

Narrative: Project Justification

- Which 21MP program goal and associated objective(s) will your project address?
- What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?
- Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning?
- Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?
- How will the museum field benefit from your project?

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

First is the PROJECT JUSTIFICATION, and in this section we ask you to tell us:

Which 21MP program goal and associated objective(s) will your project address?

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

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

Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project? "Beneficiaries" refers to those who are likely to be aided in the long-term by your project. They may or may not be the same as your "target group." Identify the number of individuals who will benefit from your project in the long term.

How will the museum field benefit from your project?

Reviewers will look for:

- How well does the proposal align with the selected 21MP program goal and objective(s)?

- How well has the applicant used relevant data and best practices to describe the need, problem, or challenge?

- Has the applicant appropriately defined the target group(s) and beneficiaries for this work?

- Have the target group and other project stakeholders been involved in planning the project?

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

Reviewers will want to see how your project connects to the goals of the 21MP program. They want to understand how relevant data or best practice has been used to describe the need, problem or challenge. They want to know that you have appropriately defined the target group and beneficiaries for your proposed project, and how stakeholders have been involved in the planning and design of the project.

Defining a need, problem, or challenge

- Remember that the federal government wants its investment to result in something getting better.

- Articulate what will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible.

- Identify why it is important that this change happens.

- Hone your problem definition carefully.

- Present data that support your problem definition.

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

- The federal government wants its investment to result in SOMETHING getting better.
- As you define your need, problem, or challenge, articulate WHAT will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible. Will someone learn something, develop a skill, change an attitude?
- Identify why it is important that this particular change happens.
- Hone your problem definition carefully in clear, succinct terms.
- Gather and present data that support your problem definition.

Narrative: Project Work Plan

- What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?
- What are the risks to the project and how will you mitigate them?
- Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?
- What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?
- How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?

PROJECT WORK PLAN

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

Narrative: Project Work Plan Review

Reviewers will look for:

- Are the proposed activities informed by relevant theory and practice?

- Are the goals, assumptions, and risks clearly stated?

- Do the identified staff, partners, consultants, and service providers possess the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully?

- Are the time, financial, personnel, and other resources identified realistic for the scope and scale of the project?

- Will the proposed methods for tracking the project's progress toward achieving the intended results allow course adjustments when necessary and result in reliable and measurable information about the results of the project?

Again, this is the list of questions, in Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, that reviewers are asked to consider when they review your proposal, so make sure your narrative is answering these effectively.   They will want to know how your proposed activities are informed by relevant theory and practice.   That you have cleared stated the goals, assumptions, and potential risks that have informed the design of your project.   That you've discussed how the consultants and service providers have the skills necessary to get the results you want from your project.   That you've allocated adequate staff time and resources to be successful in completing the work.   And that you've developed a method for tracking your progress and making changes when necessary.

Defining risks

- Every project has potential risks.
- Show that you are aware of the risks and have a plan for dealing with them.
- Answer the question, "What if?"

Examples of Risk

- What if cost-share funding is unavailable by the time the project starts?
- What if a needs assessment suggests alternative priorities for training?
- What if one or more key staff are not available during the project period?
- What if a key project partner or consultant drops out mid-project?

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

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

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

Here are some examples of risks:

- A project may be dependent upon fundraising to generate the cost share, but it is not complete by the time the application is submitted. What will the institution do if that money is not available by the time the project gets underway?
- A project may plan to conduct listening sessions with staff. What if staff feedback suggests different needs, issues or challenges should be the priority for training?
- A project may be structured around university interns. What will happen if one or more interns drops out? What's the plan for replacing them mid-project?
- A project depends on a key consultant to achieve success, but they drop out mid-project. What do you do now?

Narrative: 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?

- What products will result from your project?

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

PROJECT RESULTS

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

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

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

If your project will generate tangible products, here's the opportunity to describe them and make the case that they will be useful.

And last but not least, we ask that you tell us how you will sustain the benefit of the project. How will this improvement that you propose to make continue once your grant is over?

Narrative: Project Results

Reviewers will look for:

- Are the project's intended results clearly articulated, realistic, and linked to the need, problem, or challenge addressed by the project?

- Is the plan to effect meaningful change in knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes solidly grounded and appropriately structured?

- Is it clear that the federal investment made through this grant will generate identifiable benefits to society?

- Is the plan to sustain the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance reasonable and practical?

Again, here is the list of review questions that reviewers are asked to consider when they read and score the Project Results section of your narrative. These are found in Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. All of your results should tie back to your need, problem, or challenge.

Defining Intended Results

- Answer the question, "What will be better as the result of this work?"
- Know how you will recognize success and how you will measure it for each of your high-level activities.
- Tie everything back to your need, problem, or challenge.
- Consider constructing a logic model or an outcomes-based evaluation tool to explain your intended results and your plan for achieving them.

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

Let's think back to the questions we referenced a couple of slides ago when we talked about defining the need, problem, or challenge that your project is addressing. If you said someone will learn something, how will you know? If you want to advance equity in the museum field, how will that be measured?

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

Narrative Recap

- Your Narrative has three sections—Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results

- 7-page maximum

- Refer to the review criteria in section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity

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

Application Components

Budget

In this section we will provide information on what to include in your project budget and budget justification and provide some examples of allowable and unallowable costs.

IMLS Budget Form

The IMLS Budget Form accommodates up to three years of project activities and expenses.

The budget should include the project costs that will be charged to grant funds as well as those that will be supported by cost share.

An important component of your application is the budget – this is the part of the application where you specify all the costs associated with your proposed project. The budget consists of two required components – the IMLS Budget Form and the Budget Justification.

The IMLS Budget Form is a fillable PDF that accommodates up to three years of project activities and expenses.

The budget should include the project costs that will be charged to grant funds as well as those that will be supported by cost share. In-kind contributions to cost share may include the value of services (e.g., donated volunteer or consultant time) or equipment donated to the project between the authorized start and end dates of your project.

All the items listed, whether supported by grant funds or cost share, must be necessary to accomplish project objectives, allowable according to the applicable federal cost principles, auditable, and incurred during the award period of performance.

The IMLS Budget form can be downloaded directly from the IMLS website.

Allowable Cost Examples

- ✓ personnel salaries, wages, and fringe benefits
- ✓ travel expenses for key project staff and consultants
- ✓ materials, supplies, software, and equipment related directly to project activities
- ✓ third-party costs
- ✓ publication design and printing
- ✓ program evaluation
- ✓ staff and volunteer training
- ✓ paid internships/fellowships
- ✓ indirect or overhead costs

As you develop your budget, keep in mind that there are certain costs that are either allowable or unallowable according to federal regulations. The allowability of a cost item for all federal grants are specified in the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) sometimes referred to as "2 CFR 200" for short, but the full title is "Title 2, Subtitle A, Chapter II, Part 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards."

Using the 2 CFR 200 as a basis, we've developed a short list of allowable costs that are most common seen in grant applications. The Notice of Funding Opportunity includes a partial list of the most common examples of allowable costs – this short list of allowable cost are also shown on this slide.

These costs may be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for with federal funds or what you will pay for as part of your cost share. The rules about allowability apply equally to grant funds as well as cost share.

When completing your project budget, be sure to check that all the costs you include, whether grant funds or cost share, are allowable.

Unallowable Cost Examples

- general fundraising costs
- contributions to endowments
- general operating support
- acquisition of collections
- general advertising or public relations costs
- construction or renovation of facilities
- social activities, receptions, or entertainment

There are also some costs which are unallowable according to the federal regulations in 2 CFR 200.   In the Notice of Funding Opportunity, we also provide an abbreviated list of unallowable costs – which are also listed on this slide.

Unallowable costs may **not** be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for, **nor** can they be part of what you will pay for as part of your cost share. In fact, unallowable expenses can't show up anywhere in your proposal.

As you prepare your application, it's a good idea to compare your list of proposed expenses against these lists of allowable and unallowable costs and against the appropriate set of cost principles. If after that you have specific questions, please contact us and we'll be happy to help.

Budget Justification

The Budget Justification is in an opportunity to provide in a more a detailed narrative format, an explanation or justification for the project costs itemized in the IMLS Budget Form.

- In Salaries and Wages you should identify each person whose salary or wages will be paid with IMLS funds or included as cost share. If cost share is being provided by unpaid volunteers, explain how you arrived at the dollar amount used to represent the value of their services.

- In Supplies, Materials and Equipment you should list each type of supply, material, and equipment you propose to purchase or provide as cost share for the project. Provide vendor quotes or price lists as Supporting Documents with your application.

In addition to the IMLS Budget Form, you will also prepare a Budget Justification. This is an opportunity to provide in a more a detailed narrative format, an explanation or justification for the project costs.

The Budget Justification should be written to follow the costs categories in the IMLS Budget Form. In the justification you will identify each expense and show the method of cost computation used to determine each dollar amount, including any that you may have consolidated and summarized on the IMLS Budget Form. In other words, please show your math!

For example, in the section Salaries and Wages you should identify each person whose salary or wages will be paid with IMLS funds or by cost share, provide their names, and describe their role in the project. Document the method of cost computation by including the base salary or wages for each person and the percentage of time each person is allocated to the project activities, which may be shown as a percentage of time, number of days, or number of hours. If cost share is being provided by unpaid volunteers, explain how you arrived at the dollar amount used to represent the value of their services.

In the section for Supplies, Materials and Equipment you should list each type of supply, material, and equipment you propose to purchase or provide as cost share for the project. Detail the number and unit cost for each item, and explain how you arrived at the dollar amounts. You may also provide vendor quotes or price lists as Supporting Documents with your application.

Application Tips and Next Steps

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

Application Tips

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

- ✓ Start early.
- ✓ Become familiar with Grants.gov Workspace.
- ✓ Be sure your application is complete.
- ✓ Make sure all application components are in the proper format and follow the correct naming conventions.
- ✓ Submit to Grants.gov **early** so you can correct any errors.

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

- Start the process early. By watching this informational video you're off to a good start.
- Become familiar with Grants.gov's Workspace. It has many good features, such as the opportunity to collaborate with others in creating your application as well as a validation process that allows you to correct errors prior to submission. Tutorials are available on grants.gov.
- Be sure your application is complete. Check it against the Table of Application Components in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- Make sure all application components are in the proper format and follow the correct naming conventions.
- Submit your application in Grants.gov well before the deadline so you can correct any errors and avoid any issues created by technology challenges.

Application Tips - registrations

Check your registrations and know your usernames and passwords.

System for Award Management (www.sam.gov)
- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)
- Registration must be renewed every year!

Grants.gov (www.grants.gov)
- Passwords expire every 60 days!
- Accounts are deactivated after 365 days of inactivity.

START EARLY, DON'T DELAY

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

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

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

Application Tips

Peer reviewers will be selected by IMLS to read each application and provide constructive comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed projects.

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

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

There are many components that make up the entire application and the Narrative is an essential and critical part of the package.

Peer reviewers – museum professionals from all types of museums – will be selected by IMLS to read each application and provide constructive comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed projects. They also base their reviews only on the information contained in the application – so don't assume that a reviewer or IMLS will know something about your museum or your proposed project.

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

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

Important Dates and Times

Applications are due by 11:59 pm EST on **March 1, 2024.**

- Awards will be announced in **July 2024.**
- Projects must start **August 1, 2024.**

Here are a few important dates relating to 21MP applications.

Applications must be received through Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on March 1, 2024. Your application will be time-stamped by the Grants.gov system.

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

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

All 21MP projects must be scheduled to start on the first day of August 2024.

Next Steps

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

- 21MP grant program
- Application Components
- Review Process

https://www.imls.gov/grants/grant-programs

And in conclusion, as you read through the NOFO and prepare your application, additional questions may arise before the application deadline. We can help you with learning more about the 21MP grant program or other grant programs at IMLS, address any specific concerns with the various application components or help you understand the review process.

You may contact IMLS program staff by email or phone. Contact information is listed on the grant program landing page on the IMLS website.

You may also schedule a counseling call to meet directly with program staff. Use the links found on the grant program landing to find an available time slot on our calendar. You will then receive an email with a calendar invite and Microsoft Teams meeting link.

Thank you for listening to our presentation and best of luck to you in preparing and submitting your IMLS grant application.

Credit