

Fall 2008

Dear Colleague:

Enclosed please find sample narratives, schedule of completion and summary budget forms from 21 successful applications from the 2008 IMLS Museums for America (MFA) grant competition. This packet contains samples that represent different types of projects from successful grantees in the three categories: Engaging Communities, Building Institutional Capacity, and Collections Stewardship. They emphasize ties to the organizational strategic plan, sustainability, and the long term benefits to the institution and its community. Each of the samples was selected to illustrate a specific aspect of a good application in any category, as described below:

Engaging Communities

**Brooklyn Botanic Garden** is included as an example of a project that clearly communicates what the Garden wants to accomplish; their approach is visionary on every level. The proposal is beautifully written and shows a true sense of responsibility to the field and a deep sense of community.

**Bucks County Historical Society** is included as an excellent example of a project that involves the community at all levels during the process of exhibition development.

**City of Corpus Christi** is included as an example of a project that shows excellent collaboration with an entire city and its five school districts. This project will have a clear impact on its community.

**Mint Museum of Art** is included as an example of a project that clearly ties to a particular age group and families. The project includes excellent evaluation procedures and the budget is very modest. This project aligns perfectly with the Museum's strategic plan and their move to a new space. Input from their community is exceptional. This project is a great example of a museum as a community center.

**Museum of the Aleutians** is included as an example of a project that ties very well to its strategic plan. The project makes an excellent case for sustainability as well as very sound design with top-notch consultants. The project showcases a wonderful way for a museum to engage youth in its community.

**North Carolina Aquarium Society** is included as an example because it is a model of how to conduct community outreach at a statewide level. It is a well-defined project with a simple concept that should yield a high impact.

**Orpheum Children's Science Museum** is included as an example that clearly identifies the needs of the Museum's community and how the Museum will meet those needs through this project. This project dovetails nicely with the institutional strategic plan.

Building Institutional Capacity

**Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art** is included as an example of a well-conceived, thoughtfully-considered project. The project ties nicely to the Museum's strategic goals and long-term growth and gave the project's reviewers confidence that the results will enhance institutional capacity.

**Homer Society of Natural History** is included as an example of a well-written and finely detailed planning project. This project is a model of going out into the community, establishing the needs of the community, and then trying to meet those needs.

**James & Meryl Hearst Center for the Arts** is included as an example of a straightforward, well-developed project design. This project exemplifies a creative approach to planning and has great potential to effect systemic change.

**Muriel L. McGregor Trust** is included as an example of a small museum that after four fires is taking a responsible approach by creating an institution-wide plan of action to better care for all of its collections. The project is straightforward and very clear in its design and defined strategies.

**National Maritime Center** is included as an example of a carefully designed and well thought-out project that will effect systemic change. The project's goals and outcomes are clearly established and well defined. The plan for evaluation and adjustment are strong.

**Oberlin Heritage Center** is included as an example that identifies excellent plans for sustainability and shows strong ties to its community which this project will continue.

**Prairie Ecology Bus Center** is included as an example of a project with simple but clearly identified project goals, objectives, and activities. The project exemplifies how to include project evaluation by placing benchmarks at regular intervals and corrective actions when necessary to keep the project on schedule.

#### Collections Stewardship

**Art Institute of Chicago** is included as an example of a museum that has written and presented a very clearly written and articulate application.

**Denver Museum of Nature and Science** is an example of a project that is very clearly presented, exhibits strong design, and advances the objectives of the strategic plan that will lead to systemic change within the institution. This project is a good example of putting together an excellent team to accomplish the intended goals.

**Franklin County Historical Society** is included as an example of a project that understands its community and involves them in the strategic planning process. The project aligns very nicely with the Society's strategic plan.

**Madison Museum of Contemporary Art** is included as an example of a project that is clearly identified as a priority within the institutional strategic plan, is well-conceived and thoughtfully planned, and includes a strong work plan, clear budget, and well-qualified staff.

**Maine Historical Society** is included as an example of a finely detailed bread-and-butter-type project.

**San Diego Society of Natural History** is included as an example of a project that will clearly expand organizational capacity with strong ties to its strategic plan and multiple objectives in that plan. It is an excellent example of how to build upon a related previously funded IMLS grant.

**Santa Barbara Botanic Garden** is included as an example of a museum that clearly ties the goals of their project to the MFA goals and shows how this will increase capacity long-term. The project budget and project design are beautifully detailed, and the case for library involvement is exceptional.

I hope that these sample narratives will be useful to you as models for structuring a proposal for your institutional needs. Please contact either Sandra Narva at (202) 653-4634, [snarva@imls.gov](mailto:snarva@imls.gov) or Steve Shwartzman at (202) 653-4641, [sshwartzman@imls.gov](mailto:sshwartzman@imls.gov) if you have any questions. We would be happy

to assist you and discuss any questions you have as you develop your proposal. The application deadline for the 2009 Museums for America grant program is: November 1, 2008

Applications for MFA are available from the grants.gov website ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)). We look forward to receiving your application.

Sincerely,

IMLS Museums for America Staff