So, what do they really want?
A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Grant Making at IMLS

Connie Bodner
How to Get a Grant

• Choose a grant program.
• Scale your project to meet funding requirements.
• Prepare the application.
• Submit the application.
• Wait patiently.
• Open funding decision email.
IMLS Online Resources

Notices of Funding Opportunities
• https://www.imls.gov/grants/apply-grant/notices-funding-opportunities

Webinars (pre-recorded, live, recorded)
• https://www.imls.gov/news-events/events

Sample Applications
• https://www.imls.gov/grants/apply-grant/sample-applications

Logic Models
• www.shapingoutcomes.org/

Museum Reviewer Resources
• https://www.imls.gov/grants/become-reviewer/reviewer-resources/museum-reviewer-resources

Search Awarded Grants
• https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded-grants

Publications
• https://www.imls.gov/publications
How to Get a Grant

• Choose a grant program.
• Scale your project to meet funding requirements.
• **Prepare the application.**
• Submit the application.
• Wait patiently.
• Open funding decision email.
Easy things to do ...

Follow the instructions. *(We have to.)*

- Submission due date and time
- Number of pages for each document type
- Current year’s approved forms
- Prepare and upload **all** the forms and documents required for your grant program and project type.
Easy things to do ...

Make good choices.

• Project category
• Funding level
• Supporting documents

Check your math as you go.

• Basic counts (number of programs, number of participants, number of objects, number of treatments)

• Time estimates of hours to get the work done

• Budget calculations

• Cost-share calculations
Slightly harder things to do ...

- Summarize a Strategic Plan
- Define a Need, Problem, or Challenge
- Define an Activity
- Define Risks to the Project
- Define Intended Results and Success Measures
Summarize a Strategic Plan

- Summary required for Museums for America applications
- Two-page limit, PDF
- Reviewers will use the summary to understand how project activities will further your institutional goals and objectives.
- Should indicate when and by whom the plan was approved

INSIDE ADVICE

- Use a narrative format rather than infographics or highly designed imagery.
- Make sure it is well-written, thoughtful, easy to understand.
- Focus so it confirms the solid connections between your institution’s strategic plan and your project’s activities.
Define a Need, Problem, or Challenge

- Abstract
- Narrative, Project Justification
- Narrative, Project Results

INSIDE ADVICE

- 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.
- Put words to the problem definition.
- Gather data that support your problem definition.

Define an Activity

- Project-based Design
- Work Plan
- Staffing
- Schedule of Completion
- Budget
- Performance Reports

**INSIDE ADVICE**

- An activity is something that someone does.
- It has a beginning and an end.
- You know when you’ve finished it because it doesn’t need to be done any more (or it is no longer on your To Do List).
- It is not a “goal,” “result,” or “outcome.” It is a thing you do as part of striving to achieve those.
- Aim for a reasonable level of granularity in identifying your activities—not too much, not too little, just right.

Define Risks to the Project

• Narrative, Project Work Plan

INSIDE ADVICE

• Answer the question, “What if?”

• Look at your activities and think about what could go wrong.

• Focus on the ones where your experience (individual or collective) 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.
Define Intended Results, Success Measures

- Narrative, Work Plan
- Narrative, Project Results
- Performance Reports

INSIDE ADVICE

- Answer the question, “What will be better as the result of this work?”
- Think through how you’ll recognize success and how you’ll measure it for each of your high-level activities.
- Tie everything back to your need, problem, or challenge.
- Include tangential benefits or positive outcomes, but make sure they are in addition to, not instead of, your original intended results.
- Consider constructing a logic model to explain your intended results and your plan for achieving them.

http://www.thebluediamondgallery.com/wooden-tile/r/results.html
Takeaways

Do the easy things.

• Follow instructions.
• Make good choices.
• Check your math as you go.

Leave time for the slightly harder things.

• Summarize a Strategic Plan
• Define a Need, Problem, or Challenge
• Define an Activity
• Define Risks to the Project
• Define Intended Results and Success Measures
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connie Bodner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cbodner@imls.gov">cbodner@imls.gov</a></td>
<td>202.653.4636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill Connors-Joyner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jconnors-joyner@imls.gov">jconnors-joyner@imls.gov</a></td>
<td>202.653.4791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Feitl</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mfeitl@imls.gov">mfeitl@imls.gov</a></td>
<td>202.653.4635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey Monahan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kmonahan@imls.gov">kmonahan@imls.gov</a></td>
<td>202.653.4753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Isaksen</td>
<td><a href="mailto:misaksen@imls.gov">misaksen@imls.gov</a></td>
<td>202.653.4667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Jones</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ajones@imls.gov">ajones@imls.gov</a></td>
<td>202.653.4782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reagan Moore</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rmoore@imls.gov">rmoore@imls.gov</a></td>
<td>202.653.4637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Narva</td>
<td><a href="mailto:snarva@imls.gov">snarva@imls.gov</a></td>
<td>202.653.4634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Shwartzman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sshwartzman@imls.gov">sshwartzman@imls.gov</a></td>
<td>202.653.4641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Wechsler</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hwechsler@imls.gov">hwechsler@imls.gov</a></td>
<td>202.653.4779</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you and good luck!
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