



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

OFFICE OF CHALLENGE GRANTS

## **Narrative Section of a Successful Application**

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations.

Prospective applicants should consult the Humanities Access application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/challenge/humanitiesaccess-grants> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Office of Challenge Grants staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions of the narrative, primarily in the budget category, may refer to 2016 guidelines that are no longer pertinent. Finally, some parts may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Detroit Collection Corps

Institution: Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

Project Director: Juanita Moore

Grant Program: Humanities Access

## National Endowment for Humanities: Humanities Access Challenge Grant Application – Narrative The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History “Collections Corps”

*Describe the humanities activity or program that the grant would support, including its genesis, history, and goals. Include evidence of the program's significant humanities content and intellectual value.*

### Genesis

The Detroit Culture Corps helps teach college students and recent graduates how to use humanities to change peoples' lives. It was created in 2009 to help prepare young people, particularly persons of color, for careers in the museum field, while at the same time providing greatly needed staffing assistance for the [Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History](#) (“The Wright”) during a time of severe financial crisis in Detroit and the nation. According to a study from the Center for the Future of Museums, only 20% of museum employees nationwide are from minority backgrounds, and only 20% of museum studies students are non-white. The situation is even less equitable at the highest positions within art museums. According to Christine Anagnos, Executive Director of the Association of Art Museum Directors, “Fewer than 5% of our 220 member museums have minorities in senior management positions.”

The Wright is a collecting institution, with over 35,000 artifacts and archival materials. It has two permanent historical exhibits: “And Still We Rise: Our Journey Through African American History and Culture” (the largest single exhibit of its kind in existence) and “Inspiring Minds: African Americans in Science and Technology”. The Wright also has four rotating exhibit galleries. As the nation’s largest (at 120,000 square feet) and one of the oldest institutions dedicated to telling the story of African Americans, The Wright is a major icon anchored in Detroit’s Cultural Center.

Internships at The Wright provide unique and profound opportunities for young people to gain training and paid work experience. Interns receive training in museum administration, development of exhibitions, public programs, and community partnerships. The Museum helps foster each individual's unique strengths and interests, and assigns projects and tasks to prepare them for future careers.

By establishing its Culture Corps program five years ago, The Wright has provided paid, early career learning opportunities for people of color. By doing so the Wright is cultivating professionals for the humanities who will be better prepared for museum careers. Now, with enhanced funding as described in this proposal, we want to expand the Culture Corps by adding a new “**Collections Corps.**”

The Collections Corps program will expand capacity for our collections area, helping to strengthen collection stewardship and move us closer to accreditation. For the interns, it will develop skills and practical experience in cataloging collections, and provide specialized training in archival administration or historic preservation to college graduates with clear aspirations for a career in the humanities.

### History

The mission of The Wright is to open minds and change lives through the exploration and celebration of African American history and culture. The Wright provides robust programming highlighting the heritage, traditions, accomplishments and history of African Americans, and relevance of the African American experience to current conditions of local, regional and national life. Within this environment, up to 12 persons have participated in the Culture Corps program each year.

The Wright takes great pride in our interns' success. They gain substantial professional experience that has allowed them to secure full-time employment or other professional opportunities following their tenure at the Museum. Recent interns have found employment at University of Michigan, City of Detroit, College for Creative Studies, Peace Corps and Wayne State University, while others were admitted into graduate programs, awarded travel fellowships, and attended national conferences.

The contributions of all of our interns and students are significant, and have helped The Wright improve outreach and public offerings while offsetting funding cuts experienced in recent years. Culture Corps interns have assisted with marketing and fundraising efforts, led Camp Africa in partnership with Detroit Public Schools, designed and implemented an annual children's book fair to enhance The Wright's literacy initiatives, and enhanced social networking strategies to substantially increase the Museum's audience reach. Additionally, graduate students from the Archival Administration program from neighboring Wayne State University have worked with The Wright as part of their practicum coursework. The Collections Corps program is a natural extension of our relationship with Wayne State University and other universities.

Since 2009, the Museum has successfully run its Culture Corps internship program to provide college students and recent graduates with direct workplace experience, job training, and mentoring. The Wright helps prepare students for full-time work in related areas while deepening their connections to the community. Participants receive at least one year of rigorous preparation and play significant leadership roles in projects throughout the Museum.

### Goals

With enhanced funding, we will add a specialized subset to the program, the new “**Collections Corps.**” The Collections Corps program will include the core aspects of the existing Culture Corps program but will specifically focus on:

- Building capacity in collections stewardship for The Wright.
- Providing specialized training in archival administration/historic preservation to college students, particularly to persons of color, who have clear career aspirations in the humanities.
- Process collections, catalogue materials, develop exhibits, public programming and create partnerships with community organizations working in the humanities.

The Wright is currently becoming accredited, and is at the third stage, the collection stewardship stage, of the Museum Assessment Program II (MAP II – Collections Stewardship), administered by the American Alliance of Museums. We are in the process of completing the extensive MAP II Self-Study workbook, an in-depth series of questions about our museum. We have chosen our MAP II Peer Reviewer – Rebecca A. Buck, owner of Buck & Gilmore, LLC, an artifact management consulting firm based in New Jersey. Buck is a career leader in the museum field, having authored numerous books on museum collections management and having served as Chief Registrar for the Newark Museum and the University of Pennsylvania’s Museum. Buck has served as an officer in AAM. She will visit our museum this summer to conduct a two-day onsite observation as part of our MAP II.

As we move through this process, the most significant recommendation from the IMLS and the American Alliance of Museums’ Museum Assessment Program to date has been that we need to improve the stewardship of our core collections. The Humanities Access Challenge grant, by providing a foundation for the Collections Corps, would help us move closer to that goal.

The Collections Corps program will allow The Wright to provide and expand professional capacity in archival administration and historic preservation, with a focus on collections management. The Collections Corps could dramatically build capacity for The Wright, while providing invaluable experience to persons of color who want to pursue a career in the museum field.

With support received through the Humanities Access Challenge Grant, the NEH can help The Wright. As a result of Detroit's severe economic recession, The Wright was forced to make painful budget cuts over the past decade. Overall staffing was reduced by 50 percent, but throughout these tough years The Wright continued to increase its programming and outreach to the community.

*Discuss the connection between the humanities activities and the needs and capacities of one or more of the following groups: youth, communities of color, or economically disadvantaged populations. Include information about previous efforts by your institution to reach and serve these groups. If the proposal relates to the NEH Common Good and/or Standing Together initiative, explain its relevance in this portion of the narrative.*

Outreach to communities of color, particularly African Americans, is inherent in our mission. The Wright is dedicated to the African American experience of yesterday, today and the future. On an aspirational level, our vision is a world in which the adversity and achievement of African Americans across time inspire *everyone* toward greater understanding, acceptance and unity.

On an applied level, The Wright is specifically oriented on using the power of the humanities to serve the community, to open minds, and to inspire change. The Wright offers more than 200 public programs every year—most of which are free or very low cost.

Also, today's employers are looking for qualified individuals who have displayed critical thinking skills, good judgment, and teamwork. This type of professional development is most often cultivated through collaborative projects, creative accomplishment, and meaningful work experience. The Wright's Culture Corps Program was designed to provide these types of opportunities for talented young adults of color who may lack social capital and access to professional networks. The Collections Corps will add another dimension to the intern programs offered by The Wright.

Over the past 5 years in the Culture Corps program:

- 75% of participating interns are ages 18-24 years; 25% are older than 24 years of age
- 80% are African American or Black; 15% Caucasian; 5% Other
- 20% are Male; 80% Female

Detroit is an economically disadvantaged area. Its residents are predominantly African American (82%). The Wright offers frequent and robust free or low cost programs to youth, families and people of all ages and incomes, and offers internship opportunities for persons of color to develop these programs in order to build careers in the museum field.

*Explain how the institution, through its mission, personnel, governance, facilities, and resources, has been and will be capable of sustaining outstanding humanities activities over the long term. Identify any collaborators or partners.*

Our mission is to open minds and change lives through the exploration and celebration of African American history and culture. The Wright is led by its President and CEO [Juanita Moore](#), who has 40 years of museum experience and is nationally recognized as a leader in the field, including as the founding director of the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. In 2014, the Association of African American Museums presented Ms. Moore with the Dr. John E. Fleming Award for lifetime achievement.

Under Ms. Moore's direction, LaNesha DeBardelaben will oversee the Collections Corps. She is Vice President of Assessment & Community Engagement at The Wright Museum and leads the museum's process for attaining national accreditation to increase its impact and foster sustainability. LaNesha started her public history career as an Associate Curator of Programs at the Sloan Museum in Flint,

Michigan in 2004. Her professional affiliations include the Association of Black Women Historians (ABWH), Association of African American Museums (AAAM), and American Alliance of Museums (AAM). LaNesha serves on ASALH's National Nominating Committee and is on the national 2016 Program Planning Committee for the American Association for State and Local History. She has served on the Boards of Directors of the Michigan Council for History Education, Genesee County Historical Society, and Greater Flint Arts Council. LaNesha has received numerous accolades for her professional leadership, including a 2014 Crain's Detroit Business Top 40 Under 40 award, 2015 Michigan Chronicle's Women of Excellence award, and is a graduate of the 2016 Jekyll Island Management Institute (JIMI) for museum professionals. As an archivist and librarian, LaNesha is also recipient of a Society of American Archivist Mosaic Scholarship and American Library Association Spectrum Scholarship. She received the Indiana Librarians Leading in Diversity (ILLID) fellowship during her library studies. LaNesha is a third-year doctoral student in the Department of History at Michigan State University. She earned a M.A. in History and Museum Studies from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, a M.L.S. in Archives and Records Management from Indiana University-Bloomington.

In 2015 The Wright celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Wright's first 50 years have embodied a journey of millions: the millions who make up our ancestral lineage and who are the creators of African American history, to the millions who have passed through our doors, exhibits and programs. In its 50<sup>th</sup> year the Museum presented more than 200 public programs (from lectures to concerts to cultural festivals), presented 11 exhibitions, accommodated more than 325,000 in-person visitors, attracted another 175,000 virtual visitors, and partnered with more than 150 other organizations (see the Supplementary Materials for a list of partners).

The Wright is a collecting institution, with over 35,000 artifacts and archival materials, and is home to:

- The Louise Lovett Wright Library and Robert L. Hurst Research Center.
- Six rotating and permanent galleries.
- An active programming and events [calendar](#). In the past 4 ½ months, activities included 291 traditional *And Still We Rise* guided tours, 61 workshops, 24 Children's Discovery Room activities, 148 *Inspiring Minds* visits and numerous self-guided tour groups.
- The General Motors Theater, a 317-seat facility for live performances, film screenings, lectures, presentations and more.
- Classrooms and screening areas for interactive meetings and educational activities.
- A museum store that sells authentic African and African American art, books and merchandise.

Specifically with regard to recruiting interns, The Wright works closely with Michigan's major universities, and especially with our closest neighbor, [Wayne State University](#) in Detroit (Michigan State University and the University of Michigan also have facilities nearby). In addition to universities, recruits have come to us through Americorps and others.

The Wright is committed to sustaining humanities over the long term. Its [Board of Trustees](#) is strong and active, representing a wide swath of Detroit's corporate and philanthropic leadership. In concert with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration late last year, the Board led the most successful single fundraising event in the Museum's history, raising \$1.8 million with the 5th annual Wright Gala. Over 1,100 business, community, and philanthropic leaders celebrated at the black-tie event.

The support of NEH through the Humanities Access Challenge grant will add breadth to our overall fundraising plan, operational strength, and accreditation process. This grant will supplement an

important program at The Wright, the Culture Corps program, and will enable us to introduce the Collections Corps program as a specialty component of our other intern programs, simultaneously strengthening our ability to share our collections with the world.

*Describe the institution's fundraising strategy to achieve the required match in the first two years of the grant, and delineate clearly and in detail the planned grant expenditures (federal and nonfederal combined) in years three to five.*

Our fundraising strategy to achieve the required match is as follows:

1. Pose a 2-year challenge match for the Board of Trustees (\$25,000 per year X 2 years for a total of \$50,000). There are 32 board members, with the capacity to give at increased levels of \$750-\$1000 per year for this special challenge.
2. Seek additional funding in the amount of \$25,000 per year from (b) (4) and/or other companies with particular interests in Workforce Development projects in Detroit. Recruitment and training of persons of color for careers in the museum field would be of special interest.

All funds will be spent by the end of the grant period. The majority of expenditures will be for wages and professional development activities for the interns. We project that with investment income, we will have \$73,442 per year for 3 years to spend:

1. Three interns per year will work 30 hours per week. Total wages: \$65,520
2. \$400 per intern per year for professional development activities, such as attending the Michigan Museums Association's annual conference. Total professional development: \$1200.
3. Indirect costs calculated at 10%: \$6722 per year.

*Provide a plan for assessing and measuring, in both qualitative and quantitative terms as appropriate, the impact of the grant.*

### Assessment and Measurement

The goals for the Collections Corps program include:

- Recruitment of nine interns across three years (focusing on persons of color)
- Process and catalog at least 35% of current collection (12,250 items)
- Digitize at least 35% of cataloged material
- Interns will develop 3 new exhibitions (one/year) based on newly processed/cataloged collection material
- Interns will identify 6 items per year from our collection regarding to key annual African American holidays and events to utilize in outreach
- By Year 4, interns will prepare weekly social media posts highlighting works in our collection
- Facilitation and tracking of post-internship employment and/or decisions regarding graduate studies in areas in archival/museum work
- Measuring growth and quality indicators for programming over the 3 years

Qualitative Impact: As previously emphasized, the Collections Corps program will allow The Wright to build professional capacity in archival administration and historic preservation, with a focus on collections management. The Collections Corps will increase the capacity of The Wright, particularly as it moves along with the accreditation process. It will allow us to proactively provide expanded outreach to the community. Interns will identify and solicit artifacts and manuscripts from The Wright's founding generation, Detroit's aging pioneers in African American history, many of whom worked with our founder to plan and build this museum. It will allow us to offer persons of color opportunities for professional development in the humanities. Thank you for your consideration of this proposal and for helping The Wright to achieve its goals.