



The Innovation Lab for Museums
Supported by
MetLife Foundation



Request for Proposals
Round 2
Deadline: Monday, May 14, 2012

The Innovation Lab for Museums helps museums incubate and test innovative strategies to address major adaptive challenges in all areas of their operations. The Lab is a collaboration between EmcArts and the American Association of Museums' (AAM) Center for the Future of Museums, made possible by the generous support of MetLife Foundation.

In this second round of funding, up to three museums will be selected to participate in the 18–24 month program (see application information below). Because the Innovation Lab for Museums is a complex program, we strongly encourage applicants to discuss draft proposals with program staff. Contact information is provided at the end of this RFP. ***Please note that museums considering applying can make use of individual application clinics with EmcArts staff during the 2012 AAM Annual Meeting in Minneapolis (details below).***

Why an Innovation Lab for Museums?

Innovation is vital to the success of American museums. The capacity of cultural organizations to conceive, research, incubate and prototype innovative approaches to their work across all aspects of the institution has become a bellwether for their sustainability. "Adaptive capacity" – the ability to design and execute a series of innovations consistently over time – is now a leading indicator of long-term viability. Yet AAM has observed that museums find it extremely difficult to overcome the internal cultural barriers that typically stifle innovation.

How does the Lab define innovation?

Based on research into the literature of innovation, EmcArts has developed the following working definition of organizational innovations for the social sector, which is now widely adopted in the field:

Organizational innovations are instances of change that result from a shift in underlying organizational assumptions, are discontinuous from previous practice, and provide new pathways to creating public value.

While not all innovations meet all these criteria, this definition provides a useful framework for recognizing changes that are more than just incremental revisions to business-as-usual. It helps distinguish innovation from efforts that are simply "novel" and unrelated to achieving the organization's mission or creating public value. Above

all, the definition draws attention to the fact that innovation requires a shift in the organization's underlying assumptions about its own processes and products and about the external operating environment. Organizations applying to the Innovation Lab for Museums should bear this definition in mind as they prepare their proposals.

Proposals to the Lab can address changes in programs, exhibits, operations, communications or governance. Innovative approaches to collaboration, restructuring, downsizing, or merging are welcome, as are proposals for new or expanded activities.

What kinds of change does the Lab focus on?

Most organizations are familiar with "technical" challenges to their operations and systems, challenges that can typically be solved by gradually changing and improving current practices. Ronald Heifetz, professor at the Kennedy School of Management at Harvard, distinguishes these from "adaptive" challenges – those that demand new approaches and strategies because there are no set procedures, no recognized experts and no evident responses available to meet the challenge. Challenges of this kind require that organizations shift their ingrained organizational assumptions, and let go of cherished beliefs, in order to develop innovative responses that are unprecedented for that organization.

The Innovation Lab for Museums has been created to help encourage, improve and support the development of new and innovative approaches to addressing well-defined **adaptive challenges**. Participants become investigators driving the experiments in this laboratory for testing new approaches and exploring "next practices" in the museum field.

Areas of Focus

Preference will be given to proposals addressing innovation in one of three areas:

➤ Youth Education

Over the next decade, the most vibrant developments in education will likely take place outside traditional institutions during a transition from the institutional/teacher era, characterized by public schools, professional teachers and a core curriculum, to a learner-based era driven by life-long learners drawing on a variety of resources outside traditional schools. Innovation will redefine how learning is organized, what network of resources comprises the broad "school community," and what the experiences of learners will be like in the future.

Preference will be given to proposals focusing on museums' exploration of this evolving terrain and their role in developing personal learning communities. Innovative projects related to education may involve partnerships with traditional schools, but they may also reach out to other learning groups (such as homeschoolers) or experiment with new ways to provide learning resources to students either physically or via the Web.

➤ Demographic Transformation

The U.S. population is shifting rapidly. Within four decades, the core audience for museums – non-Hispanic whites – will be a minority. This forecast paints a troubling picture of a future in which, if trends continue, museum audiences will

be radically less diverse than the American public and museums will serve an ever-shrinking fragment of society. Current barriers to diversifying museum audiences include lack of specialized knowledge, no strong tradition of museum-going among some populations and the influence of social networks on the use of leisure time.

Preference will be given to proposals addressing how museums can close this gap and serve a broader, more inclusive representation of American society. Innovative projects related to demographic transformation may help develop a deeper and more nuanced relationship with the diverse communities surrounding the museum, nurture a cadre of diverse future museum practitioners, or help the museum serve unmet community needs that may be outside the scope of traditional museum operations.

➤ Participatory Experiences

Another demographic transformation shaping America is generational. Millennials, growing up in a world in which they can create, contribute, modify and share content, are primed to look for participatory and social activities in museums.

Preference will be given to proposals that address how museums can meet this evolving expectation. Innovative projects related to participatory experiences may explore how museums can become places to hang out, engage and contribute; blur the boundaries between “back of the house” and “front of the house;” and act as moderators and filters of contributed wisdom and diverse perspectives, in addition to being sources of scholarship and opinion.

What types of initiative are suited to participation in the Lab?

Breakthrough strategies are often represented as having three stages:

1. The emergence of “big ideas” from a background of no ideas
2. Moving significant strategic ideas to the point of sufficient clarity and ownership within the organization
3. Getting fully shaped and supported strategies actually implemented

The Innovation Lab for Museums focuses on accelerating progress from stage 2 to stage 3. Therefore successful applicants must demonstrate an organizational culture supportive of innovation and a track record of attempts at innovating (failed or successful). The Lab is not intended to help museums generate new ideas, nor as a strategic planning initiative to advance projects that are fully conceived.

Participants are expected to begin their work having already identified a major adaptive challenge or opportunity, and with possible innovative strategic responses (i.e. “half-baked ideas”) under consideration. These “half-baked ideas” are better suited for the services that the Lab provides than those that are fully cooked but need funding for implementation and they are likely to fare better in selection.

What does the Lab provide?

The Innovation Lab for Museums is an 18–24 month program in which EmcArts facilitators work with “Innovation Teams” comprised of senior managers, board representatives, museum staff, artists and scientists, educationalists and/or external voices from inside and outside the cultural sector (such as community partners and end-users). The Lab provides individual coaching, group facilitation, an Intensive Retreat and a variety of extended support systems tailored to the needs of each organization.

Specifically, the Lab provides each organization with:

- Phase 1: A four-month period of counseling between an EmcArts facilitator and organizational leaders to explore and clarify the new strategy, strengthen the organization’s Innovation Team and build momentum for the Intensive Retreat and subsequent prototyping of the strategy.
- Phase 2: A five-day residential Intensive Retreat for up to 10 participants from each of the three participating museums to catalyze implementation of the museums’ strategies. Financial support for the intensive consists of:
 - Accommodations, meals and up to \$400 per person for travel.
 - Up to \$3,000 per organization for fees, travel and accommodation, to support the participation of experts in organizational learning and teamwork at the Intensive, including one content specialist chosen in collaboration with each of the three Innovation Teams.
 - Stipends of up to \$1,200 per organization for members of the Team who are not employed by the museum, such as artists, scientists, or historians, who would otherwise have to forgo a week of paid work to attend the Intensive.
- Phase 3: Six months of implementation coaching and facilitation by EmcArts to support innovation prototyping and tryout of activities in low-stakes environments. This includes:
 - Support Grants of \$40,000 toward project prototyping.
- Phase 4: Dissemination. The program provides up to \$1,500 for conference travel to enable participants to share what they have learned from the Lab experience.
- In addition, an online resource center on innovation serves as a hub for interaction among participants throughout the life of the Lab (www.ArtsFwd.org).

What are my organization’s responsibilities?

Participation in the Innovation Lab for Museums represents a serious commitment over 18-24 months by each organization. If selected, your museum’s Innovation Team agrees to engage in all four Phases of the program, including the full five-day Intensive. Activities and responsibilities for participating museums consist of:

May 14, 2012: Proposal deadline

July 2012: Notification of participants

July–November 2012: Phase 1—Each Innovation Team works with EmcArts to finalize the Team members, explore strategic options, compile relevant data, construct a detailed Lab workplan that matches your needs, and co-design the content and style of the Intensive.

November 2012: Phase 2—The Innovation Team takes part in a five-day Intensive Retreat which serves as an “accelerator” to fully develop the intended innovation and ready it for prototyping. ***All Team members are expected to be in residence for the full duration of the Intensive, which is scheduled for Sunday, November 11 –Friday, November 16, 2012 at the Airlie Center in Warrenton, Va.***

December 2012–April 2013: Phase 3—The Innovation Team works to prototype the developed strategy and to integrate it with the organization as a whole, supported by Post-Intensive Support Grants of \$40,000 and follow-up coaching and on-site facilitation by EmcArts. Prototyping consists of one or more limited trials of the strategy followed by evaluation and revision.

May–December 2013: Phase 4—EmcArts works with the leadership of each museum to implement a program of capacity-building and further strengthen the museum’s ability to continue innovating in the future. Each participating museum is also expected to write and speak about the Innovation Lab experience, sharing success and analyzing challenges, through social media or other online platforms, traditional presentations, and at professional meetings.

Ongoing: Throughout the program, the Innovation Team works with EmcArts and AAM to document the development and implementation of the innovation project in order to share it with the field, and to craft an evaluation framework.

Up to three organizations will be selected for the second Round of the Innovation Lab for Museums.

Who is invited to apply?

The Innovation Lab for Museums is open to all U.S. nonprofit museums meeting the eligibility requirements listed in this RFP.

Applications to explore partnerships, joint ventures and mergers are also encouraged. Potential partners can include organizations operating in or outside of the museum field and may also include international organizations, but a U.S.-based nonprofit museum must be the lead applicant and participant. Partners may participate fully in the Lab’s activities; however, the museum acting as lead is responsible for submission of all necessary materials.

What are the selection criteria?

The Lab’s selection criteria draw on established research regarding qualities that contribute to effective organizational change and innovation. Applicants are not expected to exhibit all characteristics, but successful proposals will provide **clear evidence** of many of the following:

- Adaptive leadership that is able to engage the voices of multiple stakeholders in complex change processes, and organizational readiness for adaptive change

- An organizational culture that shows a high level of critical self-awareness and is supportive of innovation (e.g., evidence that independent thinking, idea generation, and challenging “business-as-usual” are valued by the organization and facilitated by its structures and systems)
- A track record of implementing innovative projects (whether or not they were successful) and the ability to articulate what the institution learned from these projects
- A high level of community engagement
- Successful identification of a major adaptive challenge, to which existing organizational strategies are recognized as an inadequate response
- A “half-baked” idea regarding strategic responses to the identified adaptive challenge, that enjoys organizational support but is not yet fully worked out
- The organization’s strategic thinking about the challenge is likely to contribute sustainable value to the organization, its community and the field
- The applicant’s capacity (as an organization and on the part of individual staff) to share what is learned through the Lab with their colleagues in the field

The selection panel will also take into account museum type (discipline), size (operating expenses) and geographic distribution in order to build a diverse group of participants in the Lab over time.

Eligibility requirements:

- The applicant must be an incorporated nonprofit organization with no fewer than the equivalent of 10 full-time staff members (generally equating to a minimum operating budget of around \$1,000,000)
- The applicant must demonstrate stable programmatic and executive leadership for the last 12 months and continuity in board leadership (subject to term limits)
- There must be no competing major institutional initiatives (e.g., a building move, a capital campaign)

How are participants selected?

AAM staff compiles and reviews all the applications, and may ask applicants to submit revisions, updates or additional information.

A selection panel of five experts in innovation, organizational change and museums reviews application materials and additional information. The panel recommends organizations for participation in the Lab and the final selection is made by the program partners.

What is the deadline for applying?

AAM must receive all applications, electronically or by mail, on May 14, 2012 by 5pm ET (see contact information below).

If you mail all or part of your application, please email Guzel duChateau at AAM (contact information below) to tell her the postmark date. All applications are

acknowledged by email upon receipt. Decisions will be announced approximately two weeks after the selection panel meets. (See detailed timeline on pages 4 and 5.)

Is it possible to get feedback on draft applications?

We strongly encourage all applicants to seek feedback on their ideas and draft applications. Members of the EmcArts Lab team will provide telephone counseling on initial proposal ideas or general questions about the Lab.

In addition, for Round 2, we are pleased to be able to offer in-person, on-site counseling at the 2012 AAM Annual Meeting in Minneapolis Saint Paul. Applicants wishing in-person consultation should contact Liz Dreyer at EmcArts (contact information below) to schedule an appointment on April 30 or May 1.

Upon request, EmcArts staff can also review draft applications and provide up to 30 minutes of feedback via telephone.

Please note the following deadlines:

	<i>Start Date</i>	<i>End Date</i>
Telephone counseling regarding initial proposal concept	Tuesday, April 9, 2012	Friday, April 27, 2012
Onsite counseling: AAM Annual Meeting, Minneapolis Saint Paul	Monday, April 30, 2012	Tuesday, May 1, 2012
Submit draft application for review by EmcArts coach	Monday, April 16, 2012	Tuesday, May 1, 2012
Telephone feedback (up to 30 minutes) on draft applications	Tuesday, April 17, 2012	Friday, May 4, 2012

Please email Liz Dreyer at EmcArts with requests for initial counseling and/or draft application review (contact information below), attaching a draft application attached, if appropriate. Only one counseling session/review will be provided per applicant. EmcArts does not guarantee that a review will make an application competitive, and EmcArts does not intercede with the selection panel on behalf of any applicant.

What should the application include?

The Innovation Lab for Museums is not looking for traditional grant proposals. Some ambiguity and a degree of messiness typically characterize the work-in-progress of successful applicants. These qualities are often indicative of new ways of thinking and acting. Detailed, neatly packaged plans for implementation are not required, nor encouraged. Applications should therefore be open about expressing the conflicting ideas, creative tensions and hard choices that innovation entails.

The materials submitted should be developed with the input of leaders of all relevant constituencies inside and outside the museum. We encourage you to include direct quotes from these leaders, providing insights, narrative and analysis.

Please submit all materials (except Audits and marketing materials) as one document, PDF preferred.

Please note that the application requires a 250-word summary. By submitting the application, you grant EmcArts and AAM permission to publish this summary in blogs, print publications, etc. While we recognize that unfunded projects might not move ahead, we want to share information about what museums are exploring.

Who should prepare and sign the application?

All organizational leaders who are likely to be responsible for developing and implementing the innovation project should be involved in compiling the application.

While a given project may involve one type of organizational constituent in particular (curators, educators, executive staff, board), the engagement of leaders across all constituencies, including the director, is seen as evidence that the institution supports the proposed project, which is therefore more likely to be successfully implemented. It is also important you obtain the explicit commitment of any relevant partners in the community.

The application must be signed by the museum's director/CEO and the head of its legal governing authority.

How are applications submitted?

Send applications as email attachments, preferably in PDF format, to Guzel duChateau, CFM program coordinator. If submitting a PDF, create one document that includes the cover sheet, narrative, and all organizational information (with the exception of audits/financial statements and marketing materials) – please do not send multiple PDFs. Number the pages of the application. Printed audits/ financial statements and marketing materials may be sent through standard mail.

Guzel duChateau
CFM Program Coordinator
American Association of Museums
1575 Eye St NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005

Tel: (202) 218-7681
Email: gduchateau@aam-us.org

Who can provide further guidance regarding content?

We encourage applicants to discuss their innovation plans with EmcArts. For clarification about the Lab program as a whole, please contact Liz Dreyer, preferably via email. If you want to discuss a specific project or explore in more detail whether an application would be appropriate and timely, Liz can schedule a time for you to talk with EmcArts leadership.

Liz Dreyer
National Programs Manager
EmcArts Inc.
127 West 122nd Street
New York, NY 10027

Tel: (212) 362-8541, ext. 27
Email: LDreyer@EmcArts.org

Round 1 Grantees: Project Descriptions

Levine Museum of the New South, Charlotte, N.C.

The **Latino New South Project** will begin to construct a “learning network” that brings together history museums in the southeastern U.S. Long known for its white and black racial landscape, Charlotte, NC, is now multiethnic and multicultural. Since 1990, the city’s Latino population has increased from barely 1% of total population to over 11% in 2010. “Immigrant integration” – full and meaningful inclusion in community life – is a major nationwide challenge that is especially keen in the South. The Levine Museum will use its skilled staff, experienced board and active community partners to begin forging links with museums in Atlanta and Birmingham. The aim is for Latino communities to become full partners with museums in the work of community-building.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, Calif.

Youth Arts: Present/Future will establish a new approach and pathway for youth education, one which goes beyond merely making art to enable young people to become “creative thinkers” and “social changemakers.” It will explore unique youth talents, or “superpowers,” which allow artists to think creatively; a professional artist residency model for youth; a restructuring of the community service component in youth programs; integration of new technologies, gaming, and other inspirations from fields outside of the arts; fitting successful elements of adult engagement into youth programs; and kinesthetic exercises to enhance concentration. By dramatically rethinking its youth curriculum, YBCA seeks to establish itself as one of the most adventurous and experimental museum youth arts programs in the country, one which could be replicated, in whole or in part, by other institutions.

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Mo.

Beyond Museum Quality

Shifts in popular culture challenge museums today to move from a position of ‘museum as expert’ to one of ‘museum as learning partner.’ Art museums, in particular, are struggling with moving beyond bursts of participatory acts, to an institutional goal of engagement that values visitor participation as an essential part of the museum experience. The challenge is to create an overall experience that combines online and on-site engagement – that closes the loop when visitors communicate, and extends the conversation. The voice of the museum has traditionally been a singular one – that of the expert curator. For visitors to feel deeply connected to the institution, the Nelson-Atkins believes they need to see themselves here: in the voices of the non-expert enthusiast. The Museum's ambition is that its learning in this area will translate broadly to a field struggling with these issues.



The Innovation Lab for Museums
Supported by
MetLife Foundation



Application

Received by Deadline: Monday, May 14, 2012
Email to: gduchateau@aam-us.org

-
- ***Please submit one PDF file including the Cover Sheet, Proposal Narrative and all Organizational Information except audits/financial statements and marketing materials.***
 - ***Please number the pages of your application.***
 - ***Additional audit/financial statements and marketing materials may be sent as additional PDFs or in hard copy.***
-

The application must include:

1. **A completed Application Cover Sheet** (see Application Format attached to this RFP)
2. **A Proposal Narrative of no more than 8 pages** (minimum 11-point type)
3. **Applicant Organizational Information**

1. Cover Sheet

Please send as your first page a Cover Sheet in the following format:

- Official name of your museum (as it appears on your tax-exempt letter from the IRS) to which a grant would be paid
- Common name of your museum (if different)
- Date your museum was founded
- Total operating income and expenses for your current fiscal year
- Address of your museum, telephone and fax numbers, web address
- Contact person for the Lab (name and job title, contact information)
- Name of your President or Executive Director (if different from contact person)
- Name of your innovation project
- Summary of your innovation project, in no more than 250 words

Include the purpose of the innovation, the scope of project activities, and the how the project will help your organization. Also indicate how the project relates to the definition of innovation given on page 2 of this RFP (shift in underlying assumptions—distinct break from past practices—new pathway to public value).

By submitting the application, applicants grant EmcArts and AAM permission to publish this summary in blogs, print publications etc. While we recognize that unfunded projects might not move ahead, we want to share information about what museums are exploring. Applicants who are not willing to grant permission to share the summary must indicate this in their application.

2. Proposal Narrative, of no more than 8 pages with minimum 11-point type, must include:

- Statement of challenge, goal and rationale
A clear, concise statement of the major adaptive challenge that you are seeking to address, the goal that is driving your innovative thinking, and the rationale for your response. Why are existing organizational strategies inadequate or inappropriate?
- Description of your proposed project
What new strategic responses to your adaptive challenge are you explicitly considering, and why? Do they address any of the areas of Lab focus? What organizational momentum does each of these enjoy? Is anything finalized?
- Innovative nature of your project
How does your project relate to the definition of innovation given on page 2 of this RFP? What shift in underlying assumptions is propelling it? How would it be a distinct break from your past practice? Could it provide a new pathway to creating public value?
- Statement of intended impacts
Why does this innovation matter to your organization? What is it likely to contribute to you and to your community? What broader field impact might this innovation have?
- Learning from previous attempts at innovation
Describe previous innovative strategies that you attempted to develop and implement, including at least one which failed at some point; and discuss what you learned from those experiences.
- Assets and barriers in supporting innovation work
Describe the capacities, approaches and structures in your organization that specifically foster innovation (such things as the attitude of leaders, board involvement, organizational culture, external relations, the ways you engage stakeholders, your capacity to implement innovative projects). What barriers exist that inhibit innovation in your organization? Where do your capacities most need further strengthening?
- Work to date
A history of how your work on your proposed innovation has evolved to date, who has been involved, if and how potential strategies have been tested, and what obstacles have been overcome; and a description of the scope of institutional change that your likely innovation will require.

- Resources you will allocate to the innovation
Details of the human and financial resources that your organization will make available for strategy implementation (estimated where necessary), and details of related reductions in other activities needed to free up these resources. Please include a list of individuals (staff, outside experts, board and potential partners) that you anticipate will comprise the core of your Innovation Team; explain why each person was selected and what he or she will bring to the project.
- Questions to address
A discussion of hard questions that have arisen around the early development of your innovation, and which remain unanswered for your organization.
- Expectations of the Innovation Lab
A description of how you imagine the Innovation Lab helping your staff, project, and/or organization, given the description of services provided.

3. The Organizational Information must include:

- Eligibility statement: Confirmation that your organization meets the five criteria given above: stability of leadership, orderly management of board composition, number of aggregate full-time equivalent staff, nonprofit status, and ability to commit time and resources to the Innovation Lab. If you are in the midst of another major organizational initiative, or anticipate beginning such an initiative within the next twelve months, please explain how you would insulate your innovation project from any potential draining of resources and attention (human and financial).
- Brief organizational background and history.
- Brief biographies for the key individuals on the Innovation Team you are initially proposing (EmcArts facilitators may suggest membership changes in the initial phase of the Lab).
- Operational budget for 2012/13 and audited accounts or most recent financial statements for the 2008/09 and 2009/10 and 2010/11 fiscal years; you may provide an explanation of unusual recent features and trends if you wish.
- Current year and last year's programs of events and activities in all departments of your organization.
- Supplemental materials you feel are relevant to your proposal.

Please send audits/financial statements separately. Please provide one copy of all financial information.



The Innovation Lab for Museums
Supported by
MetLife Foundation



Application Cover Sheet

Received by Deadline: Monday, May 14, 2012
Email to: gduchateau@aam-us.org

Name of Project: _____

Museum Information:

Official name of your museum (as it appears on your tax-exempt letter from the IRS) to which a grant would be paid

Common name of your museum (if different)

Date Museum was Founded

Total operating income and expenses for your current fiscal year

Mailing Address

Street Address, City, State, Zip

Telephone

Fax

Institution Web Address

Contact Person:

Lead museum staff member coordinating the project's activities and logistics.

Name

Title

Email

Telephone

Signatures

Museum Director/CEO

Head of legal governing authority

Name of Project: _____

Summary of your innovation project, in no more than 250 words

Include the purpose of the innovation, the scope of project activities, and the how the project will help your organization. Also indicate how the project relates to the definition of innovation given on page 2 of this RFP (shift in underlying assumptions—distinct break from past practices—new pathway to public value).

By submitting the application, applicants grant EmcArts and AAM permission to publish this summary in blogs, print publications etc. While we recognize that unfunded projects might not move ahead, we want to share information about what museums are exploring. Applicants who are not willing to grant permission to share the summary must indicate this in their application.