**Digitizing Hidden Collections**

**Q&A Webinar #1**

**February 14, 2019**

**Intro:**

Hello and welcome to our first Q&A applicant webinar for the 2019 Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives program. My name is Joy Banks, and I am a Program Officer at CLIR. I’ll be serving as moderator and helping to answer some questions today. I’m here with my colleagues, who will introduce themselves…

Kristen Blair, Program Administrator

Nikki Ferraiolo, Senior Program Officer

Christa Williford, Director of Research and Assessment (presenter)

Thank you for joining us today. We’ll spend our time together answering the questions you have about our program, but I want to start with some housekeeping about Zoom. If a chat box isn’t already displaying on your Zoom screen, you can hover your mouse toward the bottom of the screen and open it manually. Feel free to introduce yourself in this space. If you would like to send a message to everyone, just change the default from “All Panelists” to “All panelists and attendees”. We’ll be using the Q&A box for questions today, and you can open that the same way as the chat box. Zoom allows you to promote questions, so if you see a question from someone else that also interests you, click the thumbs up button. We’ll be monitoring on our end to combine like-questions together. As a reminder, this session is being recorded and will be made available on the Applicant Resources page of our website for future viewing, along with the slides and transcript.

**What constitutes an eligible collaboration? What makes an effective collaboration?**

There are a variety of ways to construct a collaborative project. One is multiple institutions can come together and create various access points. Another model is if one institution that has a large amount of in-house services comes together with a smaller institution that may not have as many services.

Here’s what we ask for in the program guidelines:

Explain how the collaboration advances the missions and meets the priorities of each of the institutions involved and enhances the capacity of the project to support the creation of new knowledge. Describe benefits of the project that would not be possible if the partners worked individually. Describe measures taken to ensure all partners will contribute to and benefit from the project throughout the grant term.

Note that vendors do not qualify as collaborating institutions, even if the vendor is a nonprofit organization.

Evidence of equitable partnerships should be included throughout the proposal and should not be limited to this section. All partner institutions should be included in the project design process, and partner institutions should receive an appropriate portion of the project funds for their labor, expertise, and other contributions.

[Applicant Resources](https://www.clir.org/hiddencollections/applicant-resources/) on collaboration:

Blog post: Collaborative Grants: Why do we care: <https://www.clir.org/2018/12/clir-issues-126/#collaborative-grants>

**Admittedly a minor question: When submitting a collaborative proposal, which institution should be listed as the "applicant institution"?**

This varies by project and partnership. Applicant institution needs to be able to receive and distribute the funds. They will also be responsible for submitting reports throughout the project. The size of the institution doesn’t matter, just who is most equipped. All partners should be involved in the construction of the proposal. Lead applicant must be a US institution.

**From chat: How are collaborative grants administered? Is the grant awarded to one institution to administer the entire project, or is the grant divied up by CLIR and awarded to multiple partner institution?**

Awarded to one institution and that institution will divide up the funds between the partners as specified in the project budget. Collaborative partners must sign the IP agreement as well. There is an sample on the website. https://www.clir.org/hiddencollections/applicant-resources/

**Is emphasis given to institutions with inhouse digitization capacity, or to those that utilize contractor services (like NEDCC)?**

There isn’t a preference, but the choice has to make sense for the collection. In some cases applicants want to digitize something rare that they haven’t digitized before and in those cases the reviewers would like to see the most qualified people in charge of the digitization project.

**When the application asks about geographic scope, to what does that refer? (i.e. does it mean the location at which the material was created? the locations to which the materials refer?)**

It is the location to which the materials refer. It is the scope of the content of the items.

From guidelines: “Describe the range of geographic regions represented in the nominated collection(s). Do not describe the current or future location(s) of the original, physical materials.”

**What are good ways to demonstrate scholarly interest or potential impact given the hidden nature of the collections involved?**

If you have already described your collections or made them accessible to scholars you can use that as support. If they have never been used, you need to have conversations with people who would likely be users in their digital form, which you could use as a letter of scholarly support, or look for similar materials and see how those have been used. The broader the appeal of the project, the more compelling it likely will be to reviewers. Reviewers are looking for a broad reach of impact.

**Our office of sponsored projects takes 44% off the top of all grants for administration costs. Do CLIR grants apply limits to restrict the amount of money applied to F & A (indirect) costs?**

Indirect costs are disallowed expenses in CLIR’s grants programs. See indirect cost policy: <https://www.clir.org/hiddencollections/applicant-resources/indirect-cost-policy/>

**Pertaining to the "Hidden" collection aspect of the opportunity, do collections that are currently accessible, but ONLY accessible through an in person visit to a rural town by appointment count? What if there is full cataloging or at least indexing of the material ?**

We have a blog post that can be read on this. Even if there is pre-existing description that is fine. What becomes possible when you digitize the collections? Describe the value added by digitizing. Also look at sample applications to see how others have addressed this. <http://connect.clir.org/blogs/christa-williford/2015/02/12/so-what-do-we-mean-by-hidden>

**Will the grant pay for people involved in the project to travel to academic conferences to present?**

Yes! See guidelines text:

“Applicants should explain how attendance at a given conference is related to scholarly outreach and should be planning to attend as presenters rather than attendees. The maximum amount an applicant may request for conference registration and travel is $5,000, unless the proposal is a collaboration between an institution in the United States and a Canadian institution. The maximum request for conference registration and related travel for [US-Canadian] collaboration is $10,000.” <https://www.clir.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2016/09/DHC_Guidelines_1.18.19.pdf>

**Will CLIR fund a postdoc to work on a collaborative project? If so, can we include funding for personal research time?**

I’m not sure we’ve seen a postdoc funded through the hidden collections program. CLIR does have a post doc fellowship program and those fellows have worked on the grant. You would need to make a compelling case that the postdoc would be an integral part of the grant. We do not fund tuition remission it would have to be a salaried position. Reviewers will want to see that you are investing in the people working with the project.

See text from Building Capacity question in guidelines/application:

* “Describe how this project contributes to **building local institutional capacity, including the professional development of all staff involved**.”
* “Why we ask: The purpose of this space is to reflect on the l**ong-term impact of the project locally,** recognizing the importance of professional development for all project staff, including permanent staff, short-term staff, student workers, and volunteers. Reviewers for this program are keenly interested in supporting projects that create opportunities for all project stakeholders to grow in experience and to increase their potential to undertake important work with special collections and archives in the future”

**Would technical drawings and blueprints fall into that category?**

There are not any restrictions on the format type. It is up to you to make a case for the materials and the treatment and the review panel will assess the argument that you are making for the collection.

If the materials are bound by legal issues or contain culturally sensitive materials you will need to make a case to justify restriction access to the materials. Also think about if there are personal or private information that may be exposed when digitized.

**Does the grant fund for thesis and dissertations to be digitized**

Yes, but you must be able to make the case for scholarly significance. We have supported thesis digitization before. See [Our Story: Digitizing Publications and Photographs of the Historically Black Atlanta University Center Institutions](http://registry.clir.org/projects/23081517), Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library; Spelman College Archives; University of Georgia; Morehouse College

**Where it's better to go with a vendor rather than purchase a blueprint scanner?**

We allow for the purchase of supplies and materials that are directly related to digitization work. Limit for single institution is $7,500 and collaborative institutions is $12,000. You may want to think about a cost share if the equipment is over the limit.(cost-share is not required, it can be documented in the budget narrative not the budget detail)

**From Chat: Can CLIR support work beyond digitization: text analysis leading to visual representation of objects.**

Yes, but the primary purpose is to fund digitization work. Any addition work should be secondary to the digitization work taking place. You should put forward a well justified argument that it is necessary to creating access to the materials. Our reviewer questions are available online to help guide your application.

<https://www.clir.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/DigitizingHiddenCollectionsReviewerQuestions2017.pdf>

**We have a collection of personal papers, unpublished manuscripts, lecture notes, etc. that is currently being processed. We anticipate having it processed by the time that our project would start, but it is not fully processed at this point. Two questions:**

**1) How does the current state of processing affect our application?**

If the nominating materials are not fully processed and if you believe the processing will be done before the grant begins, you will need to convince the reviewers why. The challenging bit may be that what you know may change by the time you complete processing.

**2) How should we indicate on our application that the materials are not fully processed yet but \*will be\* processed before the project starts?**

Within the application you submit a project plan that should include a timeline, we have seen applicants put pre project work that would show what activities would be completed. Give yourself time to finish processing. You can start anywhere before January 1- June 1.

**I understand that tuition remission is disallowed. If tuition remission is a bundled benefit of a standard GA contract at my institution, is that still disallowed?**

Yes. It is a Mellon Foundation policy that we have to police carefully. You may be able to apply project funds if you can demonstrate that the funds will only go towards the graduate student’s salary for project labor, and not tuition.

**(From chat) Collaboration - You said previously, that Applicant had to own materials. If two organizations, do both organizations have to have owned material to apply for the larger group?**

We have funded projects where one of the collaborators was not contributing collections but expertise. Not all partners have to contribute materials but all partners that are contributing materials should be considered collaborators.

All materials nominated for digitization must be owned and held by at least one of the institutions participating in the project.

**The collection my organization would be applying for funds for digitization is very large, and would slightly exceed financial limits of the opportunity. Should we plan on explaining how we plan on funding the digitization for the remaining half of the collection?**

Yes. That is a common situation. When you have a large collection it can make sense to say you will do a phase one and phase two. Be sure to make arguments on significance on the part of the project that will be digitized.

**Canadian Collaboration ideas**

Canadian IP law is similar to American IP but different enough for us not to be able to give directly to Canadian institutions. It has been difficult to attract Canadian collaborations. We have an applicant with materials that relate to the Red River Valley if there is anyone who has similar collections or suggestions please reach out to us. Check DPLA and state humanities council in your region.

**We're thinking to have each of our collaborators upload their materials into the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) - is this an allowable project plan?**

Yes. It’s a good way to drive researchers back to you and makes it possible for people to use the metadata that you are creating.

I’m not sure if we’ve funded DPLA as project partner, but we have funded Internet Archive as a partner. See 2015 Biodiversity Heritage Library application--the field notes project and sample application. <https://clir.wordpress.clir.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2016/09/Sample_SmithsonianInstitution2015.pdf>

**From Chat: Collaboration - Can the two different collaborators (one owner of materials and the other providing access and expertise) apply for the larger 500,000 grant?**

Yes, if you can make a strong enough case to reviewers. Though the bar is often higher for the top funding limit.

One thing to be aware of is that if the review panel does not deem your collaboration to meet the program’s threshold, you will only be eligible for $250K. If reviewers feel that the project could be adapted between round one and round to fit within that lower cap, you may be invited back to the second round as a single institution project. However, if it does not seem possible to adapt the project to this lower funding limit, the project may be disqualified in the first round for this reason. It may be safer to apply for a collaborative project that’s under $250K if you aren’t confident that reviewers will be persuaded that your project is sufficiently collaborative.

**Can the travel funds be applied to foreign travel if the most relevant and impactful conferences (which may happen to cycle through North American, Asia, and Europe) happen to be overseas?**

That’s fine so long as you can make the case for the relevancy of the travel and it falls below the program’s total travel cap ($5,000 in most cases; $10,000 for US-Canadian collaborations).