

Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Amplifying Unheard Voices

**Initial Application Q&A Webinar:
October 2, 2024**



Links mentioned

- [Apply for an Award](#)
- [Initial Application Guidelines \(view only\)](#)
- [Initial Application Guidelines \(make a copy, Google account required\)](#)
- [DHC:AUV Cohort 3 Initial Application Webinar Q&A Doc](#)
- [Webinar Survey](#)

[Questions and Answers](#)

The following questions and answers are grouped based on general headings to better assist you in navigating the document. Consider using the “Find” feature in this document to search for a word or phrase to find a more specific question topic.

All questions asked in chat and via the Q&A box during the live webinar are copied below. Some questions were answered live during the October 2, 2024 webinar. Any questions answered live may include additional references or clarification. If you have any other questions, email the CLIR Grants team at hidencollections@clir.org.

Jump to a topic:

[General](#) | [Collections](#) | [Rights, Ethics, and Re-use](#) | [Budget and Finance](#) | [Project Design](#) | [Collaboration](#) | [Review Process](#)

General

Q: The museum we want to apply for is within our School District. Are School Districts eligible to apply?

A: Yes, we have had school districts apply in the past. I recommend that the museum apply as the lead applicant. The purpose of applicant organizations should be centered on cultural heritage preservation. The museum can be the lead applicant and the school district can be a collaborating organization. Remember, you must own and hold the nominated materials.

Q: We would like to work with a documentary collection of a family of Puerto Rican musicians: The Figueroa family. We want to digitize the collection and make it available to the public for free. We also want to develop an outreach program that includes the development of educational modules for students, virtual talks, creation of educational audiovisual capsules about the collection, and about the history of the family and the

musical environment in Puerto Rico, and small concerts for the community. Do you think that this type of initiative could be sponsored by CLIR?

A: The focus of this *Digitizing Hidden Collections: Amplifying Unheard Voices* program is primarily the digitization of materials that have NOT been previously digitized. The next primary eligibility component is to own and hold those collections and that your organization's purpose is primarily focused on cultural heritage preservation. Eligible organizations must reside in the US, its territories or Canada.

The outreach component of your proposed project sounds wonderful, the only concern is to make sure the focus of the proposal is digitization. You want to create a competitive application that centers on the need for the digitization of these nominated materials and why these materials would enrich upcoming scholars locally, nationally, and/or internationally. You can look at our [Funded Projects](#) page for examples of previous projects.

Q: When would grant funds be available to use?

A: All projects should start January 1, 2026. If you are awarded funding, we send funds to the lead applicant in late 2025 so funding is available by January 1, 2026.

Q: Does funding cover microfilm duplication needed to create a print master copy of microfilm negatives that may be sent to a scanning vendor to create image files or would this be considered film to film transfer?

A: Microfilm is an odd category, but this is not considered film to film transfer. Because of the age of that format and the high-risk of degradation, we don't consider that film to film transfer.

Q: Is the National Park Service an eligible applicant?

A: Yes, we have had applications from them in the past.

Q: Can this grant be used for individuals? I am researching and hoping to digitize black women living in the 19th century. Marriage records are housed in Philadelphia even though they lived in the Caribbean. So my question is can individuals successfully apply for this grant?

A: This grant is only open to nonprofit, cultural heritage organizations in the United States, U.S. territories, and Canada. You must first be a nonprofit, whose focus is cultural heritage.

Q: Does integration into a digital library make it eligible or is that process considered research? I ask since it's not digitization specifically.

A: The priority of focus is to digitize materials that have yet to be digitized. Primary materials and audio/audiovisual materials that have not been digitized. Please let us know your collection and organization, so we can answer your questions more. Costs outside digitization are not disallowed. You can look at [Appendix A](#) of our [Initial Application Guidelines](#) to see the list of disallowed costs. The grant is not designed to support research projects, so it might not be as competitive, but it is not disallowed.

Q: Do you have stats available for # of awards vs. # of applications received in prior years?

A: We haven't made the announcement of our last cycle so I cannot tell you the exact number of awardees. We had roughly 135 initial applicants and invited somewhere between 47-49 to the second application. That will give you a sense of the competitiveness of the initial round. The number of projects funded was higher this year than in previous years because we had more grantees looking for an award amount at the lower end of the award limit.

Q: Looking at past cohorts, it seems university partnerships are valued. Would a proposal from a small museum without a university partnership not be competitive?

A: We love seeing small museums, public libraries, Indigenous communities, cultural organizations, etc. apply for the program. We have had higher numbers of non university organizations in the last few years, since we changed to the new iteration of the program. This proposal would not be viewed as less competitive because it's a small museum. A proposal that is fiscally sound, with a work plan and digitization plan clearly articulated, the core values addressed, and a solid outreach plan is a competitive application.

Q: Are university research institute's with archival holdings eligible?

A: Yes, they are eligible organizations.

Q: Does digitization include 3D digitizing of artifacts.

A: Yes, we've allowed this in the past.

Q: Is an organization allowed a fiscal agent? For instance the school district will serve as the fiscal agent to manage the grant for the museum.

A: Yes, that's allowed.

Q: We seek support to digitize VHS and 8mm formats. Is this within the scope of this project?

A: Yes, these types of nominated materials are eligible.

Q: To the question of materials held- we are soliciting personal family archives from affiliated communities, so it's not in hand in the organization right now. Does that count?

A: We do not fund collecting grants, so this is not an eligible project. You're not yet in the digitization part of the proposal process. What you describe is more research-based. We do not allow this type of proposal in this program.

Collections

Q: We have a number of smaller collections that fit under a theme, but we've heard applications are stronger if they focus on just a few collections at most. Are there any recommendations or limitations to how many collections can be nominated?

A: Great question. Proposals are so individualistic and focused on the primary needs of the collections, applicant organizations, and the importance of the collections to the communities they represent. We want the collections you nominate to be digitized to tell a compelling story to

our reviewers. The reviewers are looking for cohesive themes in a collection. An example would be a small group of collections that focus on a historical figure. We've had a project with 26 collaborating newspaper organizations with the theme being small newspaper collections in the Midwest. It's your task to tell that story compellingly in a cohesive way. How are these collections significant? How are they connected to our core values? We are also looking for collections that make sense fiscally. Are you trying to digitize a collection that is too small or too large for the project ask? Smaller collections don't mean it's not a great proposal, we're just looking for something that meets the criteria, tells a compelling story of an unheard voice, and will advance and impact future scholarship on a broad level.

Q: Is it eligible if the collection holdings belong to its original private owner but the digitization and licensed use is through institution?

A: Is "it" the nominated materials or the eligible organization? We don't digitize private collections, but if your organization has a gift of deed and owns the nominated materials, then you would explain this in your rights, ethics, and re-use section. You can upload the gift of deed in the additional document section. If "it" is referring to an organization, the organization should own and hold the materials. If they do not own and hold the materials, they are ineligible.

Q: Will the program support the arranging and describing of archival collections to prepare them for digitizing?

A: Ideally, this has happened largely before you are at the point of application for this program, but there is money allowed for conservation and organization necessary for digitization. There's no collection assessment funds available. If you're that far back in the process, you may need an outside grant to cover that stage of the work before you're prepared to move on to the digitization application.

Q: Are collections that have been acquired by my institution's library/archives but have yet to be cataloged eligible for this funding scheme? If so, can a small part of the budget be allocated for cataloging?

A: It can be eligible for this program as long as you have a firm sense of what you have. We see groups with collections in this stage that really know what's in there and we see groups that would benefit from more time to do collections assessment. The panel is good at telling the difference. But yes, you can include metadata processing as part of the digitization workflow.

Q: If we have a photo collection to digitize, can we include writings/commentary on the collection in the digital library that gets published?

A: Of course you can. You can have a variety of nominated materials, as long as they have not been previously digitized.

Rights, Ethics, and Re-use

Q: Our non profit owns our materials we would like to digitize however we need to get permissions from Tribal members to be able to make it public. We want to digitize all materials; however not all of the final media will be made available to the public. Some might only be available to the tribes themselves. Is that still eligible?

A: Yes, that is eligible. We do understand that in this program iteration collections may contain culturally sensitive materials and rights, ethics, and re-use concerns may arise, and therefore, not all materials will be made available to the public. If you explain this clearly and demonstrate that you have a plan, the IP reviewers are okay with this. This would not be less competitive if there is a clear explanation and we encourage organizations with Tribal collections to apply. If you have a take down policy, include that, as well.

Q: Is the rights/ethics/use statement part of the preliminary application or only the final application?

A: You can find information regarding the rights, ethics, and re-use for your application on page 18 of your [Initial Application Guidelines](#) and a statement of your rights, ethics, and re-use is required for this initial application. There are instructions and recommendations on what you should include in this statement. Here, you want to address any rights and/or ethics concerns that may exist, identify what they might be, and/or any restrictions this may include. Identify and explain any fees and/or barriers to access. The review panel will look at your rights, ethics, and re-use statements with these guidelines in mind, and if you realize you can't answer these questions it might indicate you are overlooking something in your plan. Each application will be assigned an IP reviewer that will specifically review this section, as well.

Q: If the personal family archive is in hand but not deeded to institute, and ready to digitize. Is this eligible?

A: It would not be eligible unless it is owned and held by an eligible institution.

Budget and Finance

Q: Are there any cost-share requirements?

A: No, there are no cost-share requirements. You can tell us if you intend to do some portion of the project via cost share and particularly, you may want to make this explicit if you have alternate funding for other phases or aspects of the project, but it is not required.

Q: Will the grant allow us to hire personnel to do the digitizing?

A: Yes, the grant allows you to hire personnel. You can include salaries. You can check our [Initial Application Guidelines](#) to see limits for those categories. We don't require you to use an outside vendor. Depending on your needs, you can use in-house digitization, an outside vendor, or a combination of the two.

Q: If a cultural heritage group owns and holds the materials and wants to keep them in-house, but does not have their own internal archiving expertise, is it acceptable for funds to go to 1) a trusted archiving partner to guide them but NOT acquire the materials from them and 2) an in-house archivist to project manage their digitizing work?

A: Both of those are allowable costs. We do not require that you do in-house digitization, a number of funded projects do their digitization entirely through outside vendors, particularly when they have specific formats they don't have the capacity to do in house. We have also funded many projects where a small arts organization has collaborated with a nearby larger

nonprofit with more experience and resources to build the project out. That's fine as long as both entities are eligible, or you can choose to use them as a contractor.

Q: Can some staff time for copyright research be included within this grant or must all permissions and copyright domain be verified before application?

A: It is a disallowed cost to pay counsel for copyright assessment. There might be two kinds of copyright assessment at play here. If an organization is consulting with their members about specific materials that need to be held from public access due to personal identifying information - this is allowed. However, working with a legal counsel to determine copyright permission, this is not an allowable cost.

Q (Follow-up): No, this would be verification by regular staff.

Yes and no. Staffing is allowed, but primarily we would like for you to know the status of your rights, ethics, and re-use and potential issues prior to nominating the materials. We use two IP reviewers for this program, and they are really the ones who make the call about whether an application has outstanding materials that need to be addressed.

Q: Have there been digital preservation associated costs that have been approved?

A: Yes, as long as the costs are within the allowable costs/scale of the program and the focus of the project aligns digitization as the primary cost.

Project Design

Q: Does digitization and subsequently integration into the digital library system considered research?

A: One of the things we ask is that the nominated materials would be a benefit to research scholars to advance research forward, to nominate materials that amplify marginalized voices and so we want the metadata publicly available.

Q: Regarding modest programming... We are hoping to include funding for an event for HBCU alumni to interact with the collection and potentially crowdsource info about photographs we will digitize with grant. Is this programming eligible for funding?

A: Yes, that would certainly be eligible for funding. There is a degree to which that is outreach, but also could be considered integral work core to the digitization itself. When we get to talking about outreach, we don't mean to discourage that, the digitization just needs to be central. When we mean modest, we don't mean to discourage impactful ways to do outreach.

Q: For a university archives collection, do reviewers prefer that universities use students in the digitization process or do they prefer that this work be contracted out? Which way do the reviewers tend to lean?

A: Honestly, they lean both ways. It is definitely great when students are able to do in-house digitization and learn from archivists and scholars how to do this work. It depends on your nominated materials. Is it something that shouldn't be left for students to do because they're too at risk? Or is it something that students would get really excited about and can accomplish with hands-on training? It's hard to say without knowing more details about the nominated collection,

materials, risk factor, timeline, etc. The independent review panel is excited when students are involved, but we also want to see you're creating an environment where the students and the project can be successful.

Q: My organization, the applicant, is a non-profit arts organization, and we will be doing the actual digitization. However, we would be interested in partnering with an Indigenous-owned and -operated private company to host the digitized materials for free public access on an existing web platform. None of the funding would have to go to this partner, but we want to make sure that it would be acceptable to build them in as a partner, as we believe they already have the best platform for access to this material.

A: You could use this company or any number of private companies, they're just not going to come on the project as official collaborators. There's a resource on our [Apply for an Award](#) page that provides guidance on working with [subcontractors and consultants](#), and information in the budget detail section of the [Initial Application Guidelines](#). You may use private companies for digitization, software migration, and/or storage needs. There's no prohibition on that. They just won't be allowed on the grant as a collaborator because they're not a nonprofit.

Q: If a cultural heritage group owns and holds the materials and wants to keep them in-house, but does not have their own internal archiving expertise, is it acceptable for funds to go to 1) a trusted archiving partner to guide them but NOT acquire the materials from them and 2) an in-house archivist to project manage their digitizing work?

A: Both of those are allowable costs. We do not require that you do in-house digitization, a number of funded projects do their digitization entirely through outside vendors, particularly when they have specific formats they don't have the capacity to do in house. We have also funded many projects where a small arts organization has collaborated with a nearby larger nonprofit with more experience and resources to build the project out. That's fine as long as both entities are eligible, or you can choose to use them as a contractor.

Q: Is it okay if a project is completely focused on digitization without any other objective?

A: This goes back to competitiveness. The panel is going to look for the impact of digitizing and making these materials accessible. It can be hard to tell the story of that impact if you're not telling how these materials will be made available and put out into the world. It is entirely possible you could do that via cost share. There's no prohibition, but in terms of competitiveness, the panel will look for some way you are communicating outreach and impact outside that funding.

Q: Is creation of finding aids and rehousing/repackaging a collection preliminary to digitization allowed?

A: Yes, this is allowed as a conservation or preservation form of treatment necessary to get the materials ready for digitization. If you look at disallowed and allowed costs in the appendices you will see that is an allowed cost. This can be found in [Appendix A](#) of the program [Initial Application Guidelines](#).

Collaboration

Q: Can you clarify what it means to own and hold the archives? We are a small nonprofit. If we want to digitize something from a university library, can we partner with them with their permission to digitize the materials?

A: What we mean when we ask that you own and hold the collection, is the collection is housed within your organization and you own and hold the rights to the material. We have IP reviewers that look over rights, ethics, and re-use issues of the nominated materials. We want to ensure that you own these collections, own the rights and are able to make the metadata available to the public. If you don't own the collections, it would make more sense for the library to be the lead applicant and you to partner with them as a collaborative organization.

Review Process

Q: If awarded, when does the grant period actually begin?

A: Advancing applicants will be invited to the final application phase sometime in mid-February of 2025. The final application will close in early May. We will work through the review process with our independent review panel and we anticipate making decisions and notifying recipients in August. It takes several months to execute the grant agreement forms, so payment will be distributed in late 2025 and projects should begin January 1, 2026 and should end by December 31, 2026, 2027, or 2028.

Q: Will you have technical assistants who can review drafts of the proposals before formally submitting them?

A: We do not have a process nor the staffing capacity to give individual application reviews ahead of time. Every applicant will receive comments from the panel whether you are invited to the next stage of the application or not. Everyone gets substantive feedback from our experts for how to build a stronger proposal, whether to encourage resubmission for a future cycle, or to possibly submit the proposal to a different funder. As part of our commitment to an equitable and transparent process, we cannot give feedback on draft proposals beforehand.