

Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Amplifying Unheard Voices

Session 1: Final Application Overview March 5, 2025



Links mentioned:

- [Program Homepage](#)
- [Core Values](#)
- [Apply for an Award](#)
- [Native land](#)
- [Application Guidelines \(view only\)](#)
- [Application Guidelines \(make a copy, Google account required\)](#)
- [DLF's Digitizing Special Formats wiki](#)
- [CLIR's Guidelines for Letter Writers](#)
- [Guidelines for Grant Proposals Involving Subcontractors or Consultants](#)
- [CLIR's Indirect Cost Policy](#)
- [Projects funded through Digitizing Hidden Collections, 2015-2020 and DHC: Amplifying Unheard Voices, 2022-2024](#)
- [Registration for the Applicant Support Series Session 2, March 12](#)
- [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 March 5, 2025 webinar and are marked. Any questions answered live may include additional references or clarification. If you have any other questions, email the CLIR Grants team at hiddeencollections@clir.org.

Jump to a topic:

[General](#) | [Collections](#) | [Budget and Finance](#) | [Project Design](#) | [Review Process](#)

General

Q: Will we be able to receive a copy of the slideshow?

A: We will post the slides as a PDF with speaker notes included, along with links to the recording, transcript, and Q&A document on our [Apply for An Award](#) page. These will be posted within two weeks of the webinar.

Q: Regarding the presentation of the resume or the job description, which resumes should I include? Regarding the job description, should I only include the title of the position and the job description or should I include something else?

A: Include resumes or CVs for your principal investigators (PIs) and any other key project personnel you have in place (e.g. an archivist, digitization librarian, etc.) who aren't PIs but will be working on the project. You will want to include job descriptions for any positions you'd be hiring for with the grant funds, such as a contractor you're bringing on to complete this project. We want to see the full job posting or as close to a full job posting as possible, including details of salary and responsibilities.

Q: In my initial review, there were suggestions on reaching out to previous associations who received CLIR in previous years. — I would love to do that, but not sure where to locate contact information for them?

A: We would recommend looking at the program's [Funded Projects](#) page, where we list past grantee recipients and their projects. You can then find contact information via their institution's website. However, if you still need assistance, email us and we can make introductions.

Q: Can you send detailed instructions on how to get an Application Template that has our Prior Application responses included where appropriate? I'm not clear how to find that.

A: We do not have individual application templates created for every project. We have the [Application Guidelines](#), which includes the overall application template for everyone to use. However, you can log into SMaply and access your initial application and download it. Be sure to use the login information you used for your initial application. From there you could copy and paste the completed sections into your Google Doc template, or you can leave them blank because SMaply will have already populated them from the initial application.

Q: We applied last year and were not selected. Can we use the same letters of support or do they need to be updated?

A: This is a subjective question. We would recommend referring to the feedback you received last cycle. If the reviewers did not provide feedback saying your letters of support needed to be more substantive or other revisions regarding the clarity of your outreach or the scholarly impact of your project, then you are probably okay to reuse them. You will also want to make sure the information is all still up to date for your current submission.

Q: If we plan on having a community advisory board, could a member of that group write our letter for support or are they too involved?

A: They're probably too involved, particularly if they'll be paid or receive an honorarium. Individuals/organizations that receive funds through the grant are not eligible to write letters of support.

Collections

Q: What format can the "representative samples" take? If the materials are films that have not been digitized, do photographs of the reels and perhaps some frames meet the requirements?

A: Yes, this would meet the requirement of representative samples. Often people will give us photos of the collections in the canisters. Whatever you can do to show the reviewers the collections you are planning to digitize and their current state.

Budget and Finance

Q: Is it okay to increase the award amount we are asking for based on feedback from reviewers?

A: Yes, we expect to see you implement reviewer feedback between the first and second round of applications, which can include award amount, length of project, and scope of deliverables. It's fine for things to change as long as they remain within the project guidelines.

Q: Applying from Canada, it's a bit tricky to budget given the drastic changes in US\$-CA\$ exchange rates over the past few months. Should we just choose what looks like a reasonable average for the current period and peg all of our budget figures to that rate?

A: Yes, that's a great solution. We expect these fluctuations. We will always award funding in USD based on the exchange rate at the time you receive your award. If you end up with extra funds, you can submit a grant modification request to apply those additional funds. We've enhanced the Canadian budget templates in response to feedback from previous Canadian grantees. When you submit your proposals, you will pick an average rate in or around the date you applied. If awarded, we'll use the exchange rate at the time the funds are dispersed to you. You'll then report to us based on actual CAD spent. We know there is a lot of fluctuation right now, and we know they will change.

Q: Can the application include the costs of having a student worker assess and prepare material? This activity would help clarify which items would be digitized.

A: Yes, you can add this expense in the staffing category. Be aware we do not fund tuition waivers of any kind. Clarify in your project narrative who will be supervising the student workers and the work they will be completing. Also, be sure you're paying a fair, equitable wage for the work and the area where you live.

Q: If awarded a grant, when would the funds become available?

A: We expect to notify all applicants in August 2025. After the notifications, the grant

agreements need to be signed, which can take a bit of time. We then pay the grant funds out to the lead organization in full. We aim to make these payments in October or so in preparation for projects to begin in January 2026.

Q: May we include in our budget honorariums/consulting fees for experts and curriculum development?

A: Yes, you can include these fees in your budget, as long as they're not for any disallowed costs. Please review allowed and disallowed costs in [Appendix A](#) of the Application Guidelines. Reviewers will want to know more about what you plan to do with the curriculum. Make sure you're primarily focused on digitization and connecting your budget to the core values. Reviewers will want to see that your explanation and justification backs up your proposal.

Q: Is the cost of Quality Controlling captions acceptable?

A: Yes, you can do transcription and quality control. You do not want it to be an excessive part of your budget, and it can only apply to the digitized material. We recommend attending [Session 4: Staffing & Budget](#) webinar that's coming up to learn more on this topic.

Q: We see description as a key aspect of digitization, and have budgeting for cataloging. One of our reviewers had questions about metadata costs as a part of the digitization costs? We'd still like to include this as part of our costs. Should we just provide more explanation in that section about description costs?

A: Yes, I recommend being as detailed as possible in the justification of this increased spending on metadata costs. I'm not sure if you're digitizing in-house or using a vendor. If you're using an outside vendor for this, have them explain the increased costs. The more explanation the better to help review panelists understand your thinking.

Project Design

Q: What is the difference between a collaborative organization and a partner organization? Should we list partners as collaborators on the application form?

A: An official collaborative organization has to adhere to the eligibility requirements as a nonprofit, cultural heritage organization in the US or Canada, and own and hold the materials to be digitized. In addition, collaborating organizations would play a prominent role in the project and the lead organization would be expected to share funds with them in an equitable way. A partner organization might be an organization you're working with in the community, such as outreach that ties to the core values of the program. An example would be Indigenous organizations that serve as partner organizations and provide context for the nominated collections. They may not be listed as an official collaborator, but may be included as an authentic partnership in the outreach sections of the application.

Q: Is there a minimum number of community partners required for the project?

A: No, all of you have completely unique collections. Many of you are from different types of organizations and what it takes to build successful projects is not always going to look the same. Some are intersectional in voice and will have multiple perspectives, and others have more specific, in-depth collections that may not necessarily need a wide range of community

expertise. There is not a specific benchmark for community partners. Rather, it is dependent on the needs of your specific materials.

Q: If the grant award includes hiring contract staff, would we be able to begin the search in late fall with an anticipated start date of January or do we need to wait till Jan 1 to start the search/hiring process?

A: As mentioned before, we aim to notify applicants in August 2025 and there's a follow up process to get the grant agreements signed. This can be a lengthy process that usually resolves in October. Once those are signed, we move forward on our end with a press release announcing all funded projects. We will have a more pinned down date for that, but it usually happens between mid-October and early November. Once CLIR's public announcement goes out, then you can make your own announcements and share job postings. We ask that you do not communicate about the project externally, including with job postings, until we've made the public announcement for all funded projects for this cycle.

Q: There is some urgency to our project now that NARA records are threatened by changes in Washington DC. We are having to move to protect files as soon as possible. Will this compromise our application?

A: No, we don't see why this would compromise your application. We have had grantees partner with these institutions in the past, including through COVID where there were similar access challenges. Our review panelists are experienced, have their ear to the ground, and are aware of external issues that may arise.

Follow Up: In other words, if some of the documents we are looking to digitize are obtained before our official grant application has moved through the process using volunteer networks etc. Is that OK?

A: We obviously cannot guarantee funding, but we don't see why not.

Review Process

Q: Will full proposal reviewers be able to see scores/comments from the initial panel review?

A: Typically, we assign your application to the same review panelists whenever possible, and so not only will they be able to see your initial application and your initial application feedback, but they're generally the same panelists who reviewed your initial application and provided that feedback. Yes, they have access to those materials.

Q: When the feedback is slightly contradictory, what should we do to update our response?

A: It's hard to answer this question broadly. From our perspective, as people who read all the comments from the panel, typically contradictions in reviewer panel feedback indicate a lack of clarity in the application. Usually one or both of the panelists misunderstood a piece of your application. Adjust the project in the way you feel best fits your unique project needs, but also look for ways you could elucidate or clarify elements that perhaps caused confusion, which led to the contradictions.

Q: What is the likely time frame for finding out if the application is awarded a grant?

A: The review panel meets mid-July. We hope to let everyone know the status of funding in August 2025.

Q: Approximately what percent of applications received will be funded?

A: Our highest possible funding rate is 42% for this pool of applications. It varies widely due to varying size of requests.