

## Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Amplifying Unheard Voices

**Session 5: Q&A**  
**April 9, 2025**



Links mentioned:

- [Program Homepage](#)
- [Core Values](#)
- [Apply for an Award](#)
- [Manage an Award](#)
- [Native land](#)
- [Application Guidelines \(view only\)](#)
- [Application Guidelines \(make a copy. Google account required\)](#)
- [Projects funded through Digitizing Hidden Collections, 2015-2020 and DHC: Amplifying Unheard Voices, 2022-2024](#)
- [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 April 9, 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 [hidencollections@clir.org](mailto:hidencollections@clir.org).

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### General

**Q: As a Canadian applicant, we wanted to inquire into the possibility of this grant not being available to us, as CLIR is based out of the United States? Obviously an odd question but with uncertain politics at present, we wanted to know if there was any chance!**

A: We are still keeping this grant available to Canadian applicants. We are not a government entity, we are a private nonprofit, and the terms of the grant were written to include Canadian organizations and that will continue.

**Q: Is it ok to reuse Letters of Support if we have applied in the past?**

A: It's not prohibited. If it's the same proposal and it applies in the same way, there's no issue. We do keep old applications so the review panel will be able to see that it's the same letter. We would recommend referring to the feedback from your initial application. If the reviewers provided 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 would want to explore updated letters of support. Otherwise, it is okay to reuse them.

**Q: Is it OK if the planned work for a 2 year grant term happens in 1 year?**

A: Yes, this happens frequently. If you get funded and finish your work early, you would send us an email that you completed your project deliverables early, and you would like to move to the final reporting stage. We can do that for you.

**Q: It's difficult to state definitively in the grant application that certain activities will happen without knowing that the grant will be rewarded and items can be digitized. For instance, we are proposing that we can reach out to various partners that would be interested in the content, but it's too early to actually contact them now, as we don't know if we will have files to share. Also, a symposium is proposed, but it could not happen if the grant is not awarded. Is it OK to simply state that we are "proposing the following activities..."**

A: Yes it is. We're not going to hold you to these activities if you're not funded. You only need an actual quote if you have a vendor or consultant being paid \$5,000 or more. Everything is theoretical and based on the assumption you will be awarded.

**Q: I hate to ask, because I really appreciate the help you provide, but is there any way to get the recording sooner than in 2 weeks given the ticking clock?**

A: We've set this timeline for all of our webinars, and we've managed to turn them around faster than the two weeks. Our other program is in a call for proposals (CFP) right now and it closes Monday. We will try to get these materials up as soon as possible and very likely we will get them up in less than two weeks.

**Q: If there is an unanticipated staffing change, can the timeline of the project be changed, e.g., from two to three years, etc.**

A: This is another thing that would be covered in the recipient webinar if you are funded. We have a grant modification process. The most common are no cost extensions (NCEs), where you can extend the project up to a year. You are not provided with any additional funding, so you then have to stretch the budget. Other modifications include PI changes, change in deliverables, etc. So if you were a recipient, we cover all of this in the recipient webinar, but there is a mechanism for making modifications to the proposal.

**Q: As our organization is applying for this grant, colleagues in other organizations are very curious about applying as well. Is there information that would be good to share about future rounds of CLIR funding?**

A: Yes. If you go to our [Apply for an Award](#) page, there's a very detailed list of resources. We will have a new cycle of *Digitizing Hidden Collections: Amplifying Unheard Voices* opening in August 2025. I recommend they go on now while the applicant support series and other webinar resources are up. They can look at application guidelines, the eligibility requirements, and other resources to familiarize themselves with the grant. This will give them some time to assess their collections, and see if they are ready to take on the challenge of a large digitization project. We also have a [Grants and Programs Newsletter](#), also linked on our Apply for an Award page. If you subscribe, you will receive an email everytime we open a new call for proposals.

**Q: I'm hearing when in doubt - explain, explain, explain. Does that sound accurate?**

A: When in doubt, explain clearly and justify your decision making. You do have word limits so be sure you're also succinct.

## Collections

**Q: For “Representative Samples” upload... how do you see that for oral histories on cassette? Is a simple translation what this is looking for? same for digitization of u-matic videos..? How would representative samples look?**

A: Ideally, representative samples should be a great photo from your collection so that if you are funded, we can use it for a press announcement. However, we know not everyone's materials lend themselves to this. For example, if you have AV materials, this may be harder. You might be able to grab a still image, but for others, you may want to submit a photo of the materials you are planning to digitize. You could take a picture of the actual materials in a box or file boxes to provide a sense of the condition of materials and the environment you are working in. It's okay if the format of your materials is not as photogenic for this particular kind of a prompt. This is mostly a piece the team needs, and a piece that may give the panel some emotional resonance, but not necessarily something that will greatly impact your proposal. If you submit pictures of boxes of cassette tapes, you won't get dinged for that. And sometimes, boxes or materials or photos that show the rapid decay of your materials, may be the emotional appeal as it allows the reviewers to see the conditions of the materials and the need for digitization. Overall, we understand there are many different materials and not everyone will have a perfect storytelling picture to include.

**Q: Just to confirm, we can only request to digitize analog materials? So we cannot digitize CDs, DVDs etc**

A: There's a prohibition in the guidelines against digital reformatting. We have funded proposals in the past that had a very small proportion of the collection in those mediums, but it's typically a very small proportion of what's being proposed. It may be also that the proposal is contingently funded on the recommendation that those digital materials are removed.

**Q: This may be covered in CLIR materials already - if so, apologies! Are new oral histories, or new recordings from community input sessions, covered materials that can**

### **be archived under this grant?**

A: It's not a collection or creation grant, it's a digitization grant. We are not here to fund the creation of materials. Sometimes the process of collecting oral histories is needed from a metadata creation perspective. That's the only way to incorporate those activities into this grant. This grant only covers digitizing materials that have not been previously digitized.

## **Rights, Ethics, & Re-use**

### **Q: We would like to digitize most or all of some collections, but there are copyright restrictions on some of the materials. Is it okay if we propose digitizing all materials for preservation even if they can't all be made publicly available?**

A: Yes, we see this especially in *Digitizing Hidden Collections: Amplifying Unheard Voices* because some of the collections cannot be made publicly available due to ethical concerns or copyright issues. As long as you clarify this in great detail in your RER (Rights, Ethics, and Re-use) statement and you include the percentage of materials that will be made available, and the available materials will be greater than those with limitation or copyright restrictions, that should be fine. Reviewers want to see that most of the collection will be available, but also if you provide reasons as to why materials will need to be restricted they will often understand if it is justified. You may also want to include a takedown policy. Overall you want to be thoughtful, have a plan in place to handle anything that might arise, and explain it clearly.

### **Q: In a recent grant planning session with our community partner, the conversation around identifying and making public metadata records of people, locations and civil rights and social justice movements might endanger the people in the videos, considering the current political climate in the US. Is there any insight that CLIR can provide on this issue? How can we take this into consideration in our proposal?**

A: We are navigating unprecedented time, and the review panel will be sensitive to the people who may be most at risk. You will want to clearly explain your choices in your Rights, Ethics, and Re-use statement about why you might choose to not make all the material publicly available. Reviewers will want to see and understand the context of your decisions. You could offer tiered access, or some materials only offer access to scholars or certain communities. You could have a takedown policy in place. You could also consider removing personally identifiable information (PII) so the percentage freely available is higher than the percentage that is restricted. If you are dealing with PII, you could keep that in the digitized materials, but remove it from the metadata record. Explain your decisions and outline your plan clearly in your application.

### **Q: We are working with local communities to provide guidance on whether ethnographic materials should be made public. Is it okay to have the majority of the collection accessible by request until their needs are articulated? All metadata records would be public.**

A: Yes, you will need to explain this in your Rights, Ethics, & Re-use statement. Metadata must be public. We want to see broad representation and community-centered access, these core values of the program, reflected in your application. You will want to show how these will be represented in other ways if you won't be offering public access to the collection. Will you be

doing outreach? Will you be holding a symposium? You want your collections to have broad global appeal for scholars and the public. This is a very competitive grant so you will want to make sure you are explaining this clearly and tying your application back to the core values.

**Q: Our library provides low resolution (not print quality) images for public access and higher resolution copies upon request. Is this in line with the recommended public availability of materials digitized through the CLIR grant?**

A: Yes, we see this a lot. It's required to make the *metadata* publicly available. We often see low-resolution images made available for free and higher-resolution with a fee. As long as you explain this clearly in your application so reviewers can clearly understand what is publicly available and what isn't. Some people include a fee schedule in their application, which can provide clarity for reviewers.

**Q: On the list of collections template, the last column asks, "will any re-usage restrictions apply?" If we have re-usage restrictions on a small percent of our collections because of copyright, will it look bad if we answer yes for most or all of the collections?**

A: If a small percentage has re-usage restrictions, you will just want to tell the panel why in the Rights, Ethics, and Re-use section. If it's a small percentage and your rationale is clearly explained, it's not frowned upon. The review panel would prefer to see re-use restrictions applied when necessary than to see you not have re-use restrictions when you should have them. Every application has three reviewers and an IP reviewer that looks at your application carefully for RER issues.

**Q: Please define "re-usage" as discussed above.**

A: When we say re-usage, we are referring to "rights, ethics, and re-use." We are using that as a shorthand for access. Are materials publicly accessible? Is there limited public accessibility where the materials have to be requested? Are they under a CC license? Can they be copied and re-used? Is there a fee structure? All of these would fall under re-use.

**Q: Our organization owns the physical items in the grant and we are working with the rights holder to allow us to provide public streaming access, but we would not be able to provide actual re-use, as he would retain those rights. We would not be involved in any negotiations regarding re-use. Is explaining that sufficient.**

A: Including a gift of deed and explaining this in detail will be helpful. This is a decision of the review panel and the IP reviewer will have the final call. IP reviewers are intellectual property experts, and so our team does not make these calls. You may also want to review the transcript, Q&A document, slides, and recording from Session 2: Rights, Ethics, and Re-use of this Applicant Support Series. You can find these resources on the program's [Apply for an Award](#) page.

## Budget and Finance

**Q: Can you clarify what you meant by "Copyright assessment or research" being a disallowed cost? Does this mean we cannot dedicate staff time to this type of work? Or does this disallowed cost relate to outsourcing, e.g., legal consultation?**

A: We are referring more to the latter. You cannot have a copyright assessment done by outside legal counsel. We do see applications where staff are doing some of this work. For instance, if you are digitizing oral histories that are on cassette tapes and the staff is reaching out to confirm permission to digitize these cassette tapes. That is not something that is a disallowed activity. It's more an assessment that you would pay a legal professional for for the whole collection.

**Q: We know that rental space is considered overhead costs and disallowed; what about costs related to storage to house materials - shelving, archival materials, crates and storage containers?**

A: You can purchase re-housing and storage supplies, these are allowed in the equipment/supplies budget line. You can buy supplies, but you cannot buy furniture. You cannot buy general purpose items that may be reasonably expected to have a useful life after the project, such as furniture, shelving, or archival cabinets. In regard to rental space, indirect costs prohibit rental space. As in you cannot rent office space for the project. If you are having an advisory meeting in a hotel or if you are using an event space for a symposium for outreach, that is okay and not what we mean by rental space. For a symposium, you will want to include this in the other category and name it as outreach, then you could break down the costs such as rental space, catering, honorariums in your budget narrative.

**Q: Do the items under \$5,000 need to be described with line items, e.g., \$200 for food, \$500 for venue, or can we just put \$700 for an event?**

A: In the budget narrative, I would just put estimates of the breakdown of these costs. For example if you are planning a symposium, I would put estimates of food, rental space, honorariums, etc. in the budget narrative to demonstrate how you arrived at the total amount for the symposium. If you get funded, as long as it is in the same budget line item, it is okay if the breakdown of these amounts shift slightly because they will be in one budget line. However, the reviewers will want to see justification for how you arrived at the total amount for this event. If awarded, we'll do two technical reviews. If we see anything that is not allowed in the budget, we'll let you know. However, as a reminder your budget narrative, project ask, and project detail must match when you submit your final application.

## Project Design

**Q: Can you talk a little bit about best practices for reporting for this grant? We want to make sure we are planning effectively in the case that we receive the grant.**

A: Reporting for *Digitizing Hidden Collections* grants is yearly. If you have a one year project, you only have one final report. For longer projects, you will have annual interim reports and then a final report. The final report contains an element called the [File Manifest](#) which is one of the larger elements of the project. This is where you provide direct links and that may be something that aligns with what your vendor would provide, if you use an external vendor. We have a template for the File Manifest, as well as templates for the interim and final reports on the program's [Manage an Award](#) page. You can go look at those ahead of time. In terms of the file manifest, if you are using a vendor, you may want to send it to your vendor now and see if you can work it into your digitization workflow and/or have them fill it out in a certain format that is well suited to what you will need at the end. Like our Application Guidelines, our [reporting](#)

[templates](#) are Google Documents that you can download and work in collaboratively before copying and pasting into our SM Apply space, which is both our application space and our reporting space. You'll otherwise provide digitization counts, accomplishments and challenges, and a financial report every year. If awarded a grant, we will have a recipient webinar that will go over this in great detail.

**Q: One of the notes from the panel from the first stage of the application was that we had not made contact with the Indigenous communities who feature in most of the work in this collection, made by the Indigenous filmmaker whose work we are hoping to digitize. This has to do with a lack of detailed information, which may not be available to us until we have actually digitized the material. I'm wondering how best to respond to this issue given that it has been raised, but that we can't know exactly what individuals or communities are involved until we do the digitization. Feels like a bit of a Catch-22.**

A: It's hard to know the nuance of exactly where you are in analyzing your collection. In this program, we are very intentional about making ethical decisions regarding the materials and the communities we are working with. The panel wants to see if you haven't begun this work, what steps you are taking to get to a place where you can begin this work. If it is work that can't begin until digitization takes place, it would be really imperative that you explain why that is the case. If there is just no understanding of who these materials are in relation to. If that's not the case, and there is some understanding, I think the panel is probably looking for the groundwork to build those relationships. Likely, the panel will want to see that the communities who are featured in these materials are involved throughout the process.

**Q: Do you have a preference between hard drive preservation and flash drives?**

A: I believe long-term, hard disk drives are the preferred storage format to solid state or flash drives, as the latter's memory degrades more quickly, but I would refer you to our [Technical Recommendations for CLIR's Recordings at Risk Program](#) for guidance and resources regarding digital preservation and sustainability in project design.

## Review Process

**Q: Do you have fun reading and adjudicating the applications? It seems like a pretty interesting job.**

A: We love our job! We have an independent review panel, but we do read all the applications for the technical review. We go on the road and meet you in person, at conferences or site visits. We are a small but dynamic team. We try to give you as much attention as we can, to assist you from application to funding and beyond. We enjoy doing site visits and seeing the extended outreach and breadth of your collections. We are very committed to the GLAM professions. If we lose the GLAM we lose the history; if we lose the history we lose the culture; if we lose the culture we lose the people, and we don't want that to happen. That is why we love what we do.

**Q: Are your comments included in the reviewers' comments?**

A: Typically, our comments are not included in the reviewers' comments. If you got comments from staff, it would be labeled as such and these comments are likely related to a technical item, such as an issue with a budget detail rather than a comment about the materials or proposed

project. Again, we use an independent reviewer panel. We do read through the applications and do get familiar with them, but we don't get to make decisions. We are here to facilitate the review of your applications. We wish we could fund everyone, and we just can't. If you don't get funded, it doesn't mean it wasn't a good project or application - it is a really competitive application.

**Q: I remember you said we would have some or all of the same reviewers for the Round 2 application. Is that still the case?**

A: That is likely still the case. We are looking at some possible changes for this upcoming meeting. If we shift a reviewer from your application, the remaining reviewers are still provided with your initial application and feedback and the same is true with a resubmission. The whole panel is able to discuss your application, as well.

**Q: How many reviewers are assigned for each application? Can you tell us how they are selected and assigned (without giving away private information)?**

A: There are three reviewers and an IP reviewer assigned to each application. We have reviewers that are more technical reviewers, and we have reviewers that are more subject area experts, and some that hurdle both spaces. We make sure that for each application, we have one technical reviewer, one subject expert, and one person who can float between these two expertise areas. So if we have an application that's a project from three collaborating Indigenous tribes, we will assign one of our Indigenous subject experts to that application. We look for a subject match, along with the technical expertise and IP reviewer.