

# Recordings at Risk

Cycle 13 Q&A Webinar

January 26, 2026



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## Questions and Answers

The following questions and answers are grouped based on general headings to better assist you in navigating the document. Consider using this document's "Find" feature 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. Any questions answered live may include additional references or clarification. If you have any other questions, email the CLIR Grants team at [recordingsatrisk@clir.org](mailto:recordingsatrisk@clir.org).

Jump to a topic:

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### General

**Q: Can you talk over what sort of institutions are eligible to apply?**

A: This program is open to nonprofit academic, research, and cultural heritage organizations located in the US, Canada, or associated territories, such as American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Northwest Territories. The main focus of your organization should be

cultural heritage and preservation. Some government and tribal organizations are also eligible; if you're not sure, send us an email at [recordingsatrisk@clir.org](mailto:recordingsatrisk@clir.org) to confirm your eligibility.

**Q: What recommendations do you have for vendors to handle VHS recordings?**

A: We don't make specific vendor recommendations, but we recommend looking at the [DLF Digitizing Special Formats Wiki](#) or [AMIA](#) for suggestions. Any reputable VHS vendor will be fine. You should provide a quote from them in your application and then explain why you chose them. The explanation should be more than just, we've worked with them before, but why they're qualified for the particular material they're working with.

**Q: If you are a collaborator on the application, does that count as "in house"?**

A: We have two different programs. For *Recordings at Risk*, this program is not open to official collaborations so only single organizations can apply. It is required to use an external digitization vendor to digitize your materials - so someone outside of your organization that you are paying the funds to do your digitization work. Your entire grant does not have to be used that way. There may be some things that you're doing in-house through a metadata perspective, but the digitization has to be done by an outside vendor.

**Q: I feel confident that we're readily able to digitize and catalog project films during the project period, but I'm less confident we'll be able to complete getting them all online in that timeframe (although that's the plan). Thoughts?**

A: Unfortunately, part of the requirement for this grant is that they be ingested and put online during the project time span. You will have to submit a file manifest as part of your final report. As a reminder, projects should be no more than 12 months. If needed, you could lessen the quantity of files you're digitizing so you have more time for ingest. However, you want to make sure the project is still cost effective so the review panel will see it as a competitive application. You may also want to evaluate the support system your organization is using to get the materials online.

## Collections

**Q: Is CLIR looking at how many items we are attempting to digitize or does it matter? For instance, is 40 audio cassettes too small of a project?**

A: First, I want to start by saying we use an independent review panel and they make funding decisions. It depends on the type of shape the audio cassettes are in. You probably want to add to the number of materials you are digitizing. The story should be compelling and you may have additional materials that you could add to the collection to tell that cohesive story. The review panel will want to see that the cost ratio makes sense and the minimum amount to request is \$10,000. Some formats are high cost, but I don't believe audio cassettes are one of those formats. If you did have a small collection, but with a high-risk, high-cost format, we wouldn't deter you from applying.

**Q: Is there a limit to the amount of materials you want to see us digitizing? We want to make sure we are hitting the sweet spot between having too little to digitize or having too many items.**

A: When you are determining the nominated materials for digitization, you want to keep in mind that the collection should tell a cohesive and compelling story. The review panel will want the cost ratio to make sense given the format of the materials and the number of materials that will be digitized. They will also be evaluating if the scope of the project is appropriate and see evidence that you will be able to complete all project deliverables in the the proposed timeline.

## Rights, Ethics, and Re-use

**Q: My organization is considering applying for preservation of oral histories on cassette. The material concerns local African American culture and history as relates to a Reconstruction Era school. Can you please talk about potential cultural sensitivity concerns that could arise relevant to this topic?**

A: First of all, I will say this isn't really our wheelhouse. In terms of whether the rights, ethics, and re-use conditions of collections are appropriate, that's something decided by the panel. In terms of concerns we typically look at, there are issues when you're dealing with still living populations, which shouldn't be an issue in this case, and descendant communities. You probably want to be working with the descendant communities or related cultural organizations in this community. Hopefully, those relationships with the communities highlighted in your nominated materials will be already established and they will be ongoing; the review panel wants to see that you're prepared to handle any culturally sensitive issues prior to digitization. The details depend on specifics of materials and their time periods.

## Budget and Finance

**Q: Does an award from CLIR have to cover the entire cost of a project, or can the award be for partial cost coverage?**

A: You will submit a budget detail and a budget narrative with your application. If your amount requested will not cover the full cost of the project, you can explain any cost-share funded by other sources or from your organization in the cost-share section of your budget narrative. The cost-share amount should not be included in the total amount requested, and should not be included in the budget detail.

**Q: We're waiting on a digitization estimate of our materials, what if it's below the threshold of \$10,000? Would this make our project ineligible?**

A: The low cap for an award request is \$10,000 and if you request under this amount, your project will be disqualified. All of your funding doesn't necessarily have to specifically and only go to digitization. You may need some metadata work, transcription, translation, mitigation of materials, and/or shipping to/from the vendor. These are some examples of other costs. We always want to see at least 50% of your project ask to directly fund the digitization of your materials. But if, for example, you got a \$9,500 digitization quote, you'd likely have additional expenses that could make your project appropriately scoped to request the minimum project ask.

**Q: Can the cost of storage of originals be funded?**

A: No, you can buy rehousing supplies, but ongoing storage costs should be covered by the applying organization. This would be considered an indirect cost and is disallowed.

**Q: Is travel permitted?**

A: Yes, travel is permitted if it is related to bringing the materials to the vendor. Some materials are very high risk and so they might need transportation depending on how high risk they are. We do have a 50-50 rule in *Recordings at Risk*. It states that at least 50% of your total project ask should be dedicated to digitization expenses. Keep that in mind as you're building out your budgets. You will want to provide justification for other expenses in your budget narrative, as well. You can find additional guidance in [Appendix A of the Application Guidelines](#).

## Review Process

**Q: What types of projects have been funded in the past?**

A: You can go to our website and visit our [Funded Projects page](#). We have 12 funded cycles for this program and we typically have about 15 awardees per cycle. There have been a range of projects from digitizing Indigenous languages on old wax cylinders and more modern projects digitizing VHS from a variety of organization types. We recommend you go check them out on the funded projects page because there is a pretty wide range.

**Q: Is there a Canadian component to the review panel?**

A: We are working on building out our review panel now for this cycle with the addition of Canadian practitioners since we've expanded the eligibility of the program. We don't have all of those panelists in place yet. We expect to have them up on the website in the next month or so.