

Digitizing Hidden Collections: Amplifying Unheard Voices

Session 1: Final Application Overview
March 4, 2026



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, 2022-2025](#)
- [2025 Recorded Presentations Playlist](#)
- [Draft Your Application Resources](#)
- [Registration for the Applicant Support Series Session 5, March 31](#)
- [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 4, 2026, 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:

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General

Q: How do you define "individuals directly involved"? (related to who can provide an external letter of support)

A: Any of the PIs on the program, any vendors or consultants, anyone being paid by grant funds, anyone on the staff of the project, someone from a community advisory board. No one receiving payment for the project is eligible to write a letter of support. A long term volunteer would be ok, as long as they are not working on the project and not receiving payment from the project. However, a stronger application will include additional letters from people farther removed from the project. The [Application Guidelines](#) (see page 24) include more information and guidance about soliciting external letters of support.

Q: If we are providing travel costs for community members, does that count? (related to who can provide an external letter of support)

A: Yes, you can include travel expenses. If this is related to who can provide letters of support, covering travel costs would count as a person receiving funding from the project. You need to provide at least one and you can include up to 4 external letters of support. Again, for your application to be competitive, you need to demonstrate the potential wide impact of the materials you are nominating for digitization and you want to consider letters of support from those not tied to the project.

Q: If working with a community partner, should letters of support be formal like a memorandum of agreement, or just a letter?

A: This depends on what you mean by working with a community partner. If you're working with them to the degree that they're a collaborative partner on the project, they should be identified as such and the application will lead you through what to do. For example, you need to include a letter of commitment from all official collaborators on a project. If it is a partner you're utilizing for services over \$5,000, they are considered a vendor and you will need to supply a quote/estimate for their work. A memorandum of agreement (MOA) might be appropriate if for example they've donated materials. Keep in mind, external letters of support cannot come from a vendor, collaborator, community partner, or anyone directly involved in the project. The [Application Guidelines](#) provide more information on the differences between a letter of commitment and external letters of support.

Q: Can letters of support be in Spanish, or should we translate them into English?

A: We don't require these materials to be submitted in English; we understand that in some communities your supporters might not be English speaking. However, our panel is heavily anglophone, and we might suggest you provide a translation. If not, we will provide a computer generated translation and that could introduce mistakes or misunderstandings. Ideally, you should provide the letter in both Spanish and a translation into English by someone fluent in both languages.

Q: The final application states that we can only include 5 resumes/job descriptions. What should we do if we have more than 5 people involved in the project?

A: You should have resumes for all the principal investigators (PIs) on the project, and you can have up to 3 PIs on the project. You can also include resumes for others involved in the project, but you will want to prioritize including resumes for the PIs. You will also want to include job

descriptions for new hires, and you can combine those job descriptions into one upload. You are welcome to highlight additional people working on the project in the work plan.

Collections

Q. Regarding the specificity needed for the quantity of materials, do we need the exact number of pages or images needed?

A: Not everyone will have an exact number, and we understand that. If you have estimates, that's great and generally, that is what we anticipate. Estimate to the best of your ability and you may want to include information about how you arrived at your estimates.

Q: Are there rubric “penalties” for organizations with undefined collections?

A: I would not say that. The primary thing the panel is evaluating is whether they think you're in a space where you can successfully complete the project as detailed. For some of you, based on materials and scope of your project, they'll understand you are estimating. For example, if you have a large project with many manuscripts or many photographs and you don't know the exact number. You can also use space measurements, such as linear feet. There's no penalty, but the reviewers want to be convinced you understand the scope of your project and can complete the project on the proposed timeline. They will also want to see that the materials in your collection tell a cohesive story.

Budget and Finance

Q: One reviewer of our application questioned whether CLIR should (or should not) support translation work (from Japanese/Spanish into English). We believe that (human, not machine) translation of documents is important for ethical community access — can you clarify if translation is supportable by CLIR and if so, how we should respond to this reviewer feedback in our final application?

A: Yes, translation is an allowable cost. We would recommend stating why you believe human translation of the documents are important and why it is important to your collection. They may also want to make sure your budget is first focused on digitization and secondarily, supporting other aspects, such as translation. You should explain why this expense is important to include based on your collection and those who will be accessing your collection.

Rights, Ethics, and Re-use

Q: I wonder what ethical exceptions you consider relevant to the limit of metadata being registered as public domain (creative commons). Our project concerns archives of indigenous communities.

A: We have had exceptions around tribal materials, personally identifiable information (PII), health-related materials, disability records, etc. It should be tailored to the needs of your project. We encourage some level of metadata so that researchers know the records exist, but you can perhaps use a more vague level of metadata that excludes identifiable information, e.g. names. Restrictions are often related to living folks. The need to limit metadata is not an unknown issue in this program.

Project Design

Q: If we see the design of the workplan and budget might need to shift from the initial application submitted, is that welcomed/acceptable?

A: It is very welcome and acceptable. The reviewers will expect to see changes between your initial and final applications. Further, they will expect your final applications to be more detailed and expanded in response to a more detailed assessment of collections, reviewer comments, more developed partnerships, etc. You are not tied to your initial request or design of your work plan. Overall, reviewers will want to see evidence that you understand the scope of your project, that you are able to support your estimations, and that your proposed budget narrative makes sense fiscally at this stage in your proposal.

Q: A piece of our project includes gathering an ethics advisory group to help determine best practices for rights, reuse, and ethical distribution. Can you offer any advice on how to communicate this in our application, as I know a requirement asks for us to describe practices already in place?

A: Yes, the reviewers want to see that you already have established relationships and authentic partnerships with the voice groups and communities represented in your collections. I would include information on your advisory group in the rights, ethics, and re-use section of the application, and throughout your workplan, noting who will make up the advisory group and how/when the advisory group will be involved throughout your project. Some examples may be reviewing access restrictions or the creation of metadata for cultural sensitive materials. Your advisory board may also show up in your budget if you are offering them honorariums for their contributions, which is highly recommended.

Q: On translation and metadata: if we have a document in an indigenous language, do we have to provide an English translation or can we choose to feature only the indigenous language?

A: There's no requirement that you provide an English translation.

Q: One of the comments from the reviewers was the suggestion to create interpretive materials. Is this an expected component of the outcomes?

A: No, this is not an expected component of the outcomes. Reviewers may give suggestions based on their experiences or what they have seen in other projects. The outcomes are a very integral component of a competitive application. If they have suggestions to expand your outcomes or deliverables, I would take that into consideration. If what they suggest is not something you are able to do or doesn't make sense for your materials or proposed project, you can explain why you are choosing to move in a different direction. You can always email us about the specifics of your project if you have further questions about the requirements and the feedback you received.