



## Agency Recommendation Summary

Proposed is an Economic Recovery grants program for the heritage sector which has been impacted severely by the pandemic and associated economic decline. Federal relief program through the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts provided little relief overall, and in general were not targeted at heritage organizations. WSHS proposes a small grants program designed to support programming and capacity building efforts at heritage organizations around the state. The program will provide grants up to \$15,000 and will provide two types of grants: 1) Support for public programs, educational programs, collections efforts, exhibitions, growing organizational capacity and 2) Support for internships focused on improving Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts at heritage organizations.

## Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2022	2023	2021-23	2024	2025	2023-25
<b>Staffing</b>						
FTEs	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
<b>Operating Expenditures</b>						
Fund 001 - 1	\$250	\$250	\$500	\$250	\$250	\$500
Total Expenditures	<b>\$250</b>	<b>\$250</b>	<b>\$500</b>	<b>\$250</b>	<b>\$250</b>	<b>\$500</b>

## Decision Package Description

### Summary

The WSHS requests \$500,000 to distribute over the course of the FY21-23 biennium in small operating grants to heritage organizations impacted by COVID-19 and the associated economic decline. These grants will be distributed through a competitive process to nonprofits, tribal organizations and local governments who have a mission to preserve and interpret history and heritage for the general public and have experienced negative fiscal impacts due to COVID-19.

**Rationale:** Washington State has 400+ heritage organizations that include local history museums and historical societies, tribal museums and cultural centers, online archives, historic gardens and historic house museums, maritime museums and historic ships, and genealogical societies. In early 2020, the Washington State Historical Society launched a survey of the heritage sector to collect basic data and assess areas of need. The majority of organizations surveyed identified lack of funding as the primary factor limiting their ability to provide new programs, better steward their collections, and engage more diverse audiences. That was their primary need pre-pandemic.

Beginning in March of this year indefinite closures due to COVID-19 had an immediate negative impact on the health of our state's heritage sector. Survey results indicate the pre-existing needs for funding support have been exacerbated by the ongoing economic and public health crisis. Heritage organizations large and small are experiencing severe financial impacts as a result of prolonged closures caused by the current public health crisis. These impacts include the inability to earn revenue from museum admissions, school programs, public events and facility rentals. Many organizations had to cancel annual fundraisers and have experienced a decline in individual and corporate giving. Even after re-opening, these impacts will be felt for years as depleted reserves, low cash flow, and reduced visitorship lead to operational instability. A recent nationwide survey conducted by the American Alliance for Museums found that:

- One-third (33%) of museum directors surveyed confirmed there was a "significant risk" of closing permanently by next fall, or they "didn't know" if they would survive.
- The vast majority (87%) of museums have only 12 months or less of financial operating reserves remaining, with 56% having less than six months left to cover operations.
- Two-thirds (64%) of directors predicted cuts in education, programming, or other public services due to significant budget cuts.

While a small portion of the heritage sector was able to access federal CARES Act programs such as PPP loans and humanities relief grants, there has been very little federal relief funding specifically for museums and heritage organizations. This funding gap was widened by the fact that 66% of our state's heritage organizations are volunteer run and were denied access to federal COVID relief programs which were primarily designed to help organizations retain paid staff.

The arts sector benefits from state general fund support through general operating grants administered by ArtsWA. The WSHS was given the authority to make similar grants in a revision to [RCW 27.34](#) passed in the 2020 legislative session. WSHS had originally hoped to use contributed income to fund small operating grants to the sector, but having itself been hit hard by closure during the pandemic, this is no longer

possible. The WSHS seeks to exercise this authority by providing general operating support to our State's vital heritage sector to help fill the gap in COVID-19 relief funding at a time when local history and heritage is threatened by the economic pressures of the global pandemic. WSHS would view this one-time appropriation as a pilot project for an ongoing state-funded program and collect data on the impact of the COVID-19 relief program that can be used to evaluate whether a long term program would be needed and effective.

### **Program Structure**

Proposed is the distribution of \$250,000 each year of the biennium. Grant applications will be evaluated by a volunteer group of leaders from the heritage community, supported by our existing Heritage Outreach Manager and a new, temporary .5 FTE program specialist 3 in grants management. Grants will be no larger than \$15,000 and will be divided between two funding areas:

1. Support for operational expenses including programs, exhibitions, collections support, and capacity building efforts: There are relatively few grant opportunities for heritage organizations, which fall between the cracks of arts funders and health and human services funders. And yet, these organizations are located in nearly every community across our state, often on the frontlines of safeguarding historic structures, teaching local and regional history, and collecting objects and ephemera that will inform future generations. Even very small grants can be put to great use by these organizations to create exhibitions, develop a lecture series, or put their collections online.

2. Support for paid internships partnering emerging museum professionals with local history museums and historical societies to promote diversity, equity, access, and inclusion initiatives: While struggling to remain vital amidst the uncertainties brought on by COVID-19, many heritage organizations are considering what role museums play in perpetuating systemic racism and how they can ignite or renew efforts to address inequities in their practices. Just 29% percent of heritage organizations surveyed at the beginning of 2020 report adopting a diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (DEAI) statement for their institution. Anecdotally we know that recent demands for acknowledging and addressing racism have encouraged reflection and dialogue within these institutions, but many don't know where to start with this work.

To support organizations seeking to move forward in their DEAI work, the WSHS proposes earmarking a portion of the funds in this request for a paid internship program focused on promoting equity in small museums. This program will place current graduate students, or recent graduates, in local history museums and historical societies across Washington to support efforts to reflect on institutional bias and implement new practices to ensure collections, exhibitions and public programs capture, preserve, and interpret the stories of all members of the communities they serve.

The Society believes that this equity work is vitally important to the long term health of the statewide heritage sector. In order for a community to support their local history museum or historical society it is important that they see themselves represented there. And as communities change over time, so must our thinking and practice around heritage work. The best way that we can rebuild our heritage sector in the wake of this unprecedented public health and economic crisis is to help these organizations remain relevant and support their efforts to partner with their communities to understand how history connects us all.

### **WSHS Readiness**

WSHS has overseen the Heritage Capital Projects grant program under the capital budget for 25 years. Our experience managing this program is directly translatable to a grant program focused on operating grants. In fact, the Society already has a grants management software system that is quite robust and capable of managing online applications and grants management for the proposed program. Other recent grants management experience was gained during the Women's Suffrage Centennial when the Society directed \$150,000 in grant support to organizations across the state in support of their Suffrage commemoration activities. The Society's existing relationships with heritage organizations small and large will ensure our ability to get the word out, and gain participation by a wide variety of entities.

**Assumptions and Calculations**

**Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:**

NA

**Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:**

NEW HERITAGE ORGS GRANT SPECIALIST	107J PROG SPEC 3	2022 Wages	0.50 FTE	A003	29,844.00
NEW HERITAGE ORGS GRANT SPECIALIST	107J PROG SPEC 3	2022 Benefits		A003	18,098.88
NEW HERITAGE ORGS GRANT SPECIALIST	107J PROG SPEC 3	2023 Wages	0.50 FTE	A003	31,374.00
NEW HERITAGE ORGS GRANT SPECIALIST	107J PROG SPEC 3	2023 Benefits		A003	18,414.96

**Workforce Assumptions:**

NEW HERITAGE ORGS GRANT SPECIALIST	107J PROG SPEC 3	2022 Wages	0.50 FTE	A003	29,844.00
NEW HERITAGE ORGS GRANT SPECIALIST	107J PROG SPEC 3	2022 Benefits		A003	18,098.88
NEW HERITAGE ORGS GRANT SPECIALIST	107J PROG SPEC 3	2023 Wages	0.50 FTE	A003	31,374.00
NEW HERITAGE ORGS GRANT SPECIALIST	107J PROG SPEC 3	2023 Benefits		A003	18,414.96

**How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?**

A major focus of this grant program is to support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives within heritage organizations statewide through a paid internship program. Possible projects could include:

- An oral history project in an underrepresented community
- Documenting histories from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
- Establishing a community advisory committee
- Conducting a collections assessment
- Establishing DEI training, policies and procedures

Initiatives such as these will enable these organizations to incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion principles into their practice, and hopefully lead to a long term focus on inclusive history practices. Additionally, because the internships are paid, the program will support equity for the interns by allowing them to participate regardless of their socioeconomic status.

## Strategic and Performance Outcomes

### **Strategic Framework:**

The Society's five-year strategic plan, approved by our board of directors in June 2018, identified the following strategic goals:

- Create meaningful impact in each region of the state
- Build new audiences and grow existing audiences, locally and statewide
- Develop institutional assets to meet the evolving needs of our collection, visitors, and customers
- Grow organizational resources to support our mission sustainably
- Embrace inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA)

This COVID-19 relief program for heritage organizations helps the Society meet the first and last of these goals. By supporting the operations of heritage organizations across the state, we advance our goal to create meaningful impact statewide. As well, through the proposed DEI internship grants, the Society will further strengthen its own diversity and inclusion goals.

### **Performance Outcomes:**

Expected outcomes include:

- Development of high quality programs, exhibitions and collections initiatives in heritage organizations across the state, all of which benefit the public.
- Completion of DEI focused initiatives in heritage organizations, improving the diversity of the historical narrative and helping to bring inclusion to museum practice in Washington
- New museum professionals have opportunities for paid, on-the-job learning in the field. Paid internships also bring diversity and inclusion to the heritage sector by ensuring that access to internships is not limited to those with financial privilege
- Greater financial stability for heritage organizations following the COVID-19 pandemic

## Other Collateral Connections

### **State Workforce Impacts:**

NA

### **Intergovernmental:**

Tribal entities and local governments will be eligible to receive grants through this program. We anticipate that they would welcome this support.

### **State Facilities Impacts:**

NA

### **Changes from Current Law:**

NA

### **Puget Sound Recovery:**

NA

### **Legal or Administrative Mandates:**

NA

### **Stakeholder Response:**

Stakeholders for this proposal are history and heritage organizations statewide. We anticipate strong support from these stakeholders for the proposed program as it will provide economic relief following the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Reference Documents

[HW Letter of Support WSHM 9.13.20.docx](#)

[WSHS Support Letter Executed.pdf](#)

[WSHS ltr of support 9.14.20.docx](#)

## IT Addendum

### **Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?**

No

## Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2022	2023	2021-23	2024	2025	2023-25
Obj. A	\$30	\$31	\$61	\$31	\$31	\$62
Obj. B	\$20	\$19	\$39	\$19	\$19	\$38
Obj. N	\$200	\$200	\$400	\$200	\$200	\$400

## Agency Contact Information

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