

Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Amplifying Unheard Voices

Initial Applicant Webinar: Q&A
August 21, 2024



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](#)
- [Guidelines on Letters of Support](#)
- [Projects funded through Digitizing Hidden Collections, 2015-2020 and DHC: Amplifying Unheard Voices, 2021](#)
- [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 August 21, 2024 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 hiddencollections@clir.org.

Jump to a topic:

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General

Q: What about independent scholars and private archives?

A: The program is currently open only to nonprofit organizations in the US and Canada, and not modeled to be open to individuals on a private basis.

Q: Would we be eligible if we have previously received an award through this program for a different project/collection set?

A: All projects will start January 1, 2026 and end no later than December 31, 2028. If your currently funded project is on track to be completed before the start date of January 1, 2026, you will be eligible.

Q: Why is the start date so far out?

A: It's a two-step application involving an abbreviated initial application and if invited to the final round a longer final application process. The process for the initial application includes: the initial application and tech review, the initial panel review, feedback and comments, and notifications. For those invited to the final panel we repeat the same process and include an applicant support webinar series, and the grant agreement process itself. It's a long process, but we try to be thorough and provide equitable opportunities for people to put forth a competitive application.

Q: Hi, I'm from the north of Argentina. I'm working with an indigenous community. I want to know if we can apply, thanks.

A: Unfortunately, this project is only open to nonprofit cultural heritage and preservation organizations located within the US or Canada. Nominated materials must be owned and held by an organization within the US or Canada.

Q: A variant of another query: does having received prior funding from another (in my case European) funding source compromise eligibility?

A: No. We only track previous funding within our own programs. If you were working on a large scale project for which this funding will just be covering a phase of the project, it will make sense to explain that in the application. The review panel is used to seeing this. Make sure you keep the budgeting of the two projects completely separate.

Q: Would we be able to make the collection public on our own platform?

A: Yes, the requirement for this program is to make the metadata publicly available. Sometimes smaller organizations may have constraints with long term sustainability of the nominated materials, or to house the project. They may elect to collaborate with another organization with greater capacity in these areas.

Q: What is an "authentic partnership"?

A: Authentic partnerships foreground meaningful engagement with the communities and organizations whose materials the source materials tell and build inclusive teams across organizational and geographic boundaries. Each partner's needs and goals should be acknowledged in the project planning stages, working to design the project together. Throughout the process, each partner should be clear on the goals and deliverables and have a voice in any decisions about fulfilling them.

Example: In an Indigenous collection, we want to see that you already have and continue to build a relationship with the tribal community whose collections you're digitizing; getting their permission, getting their input on how materials will be digitized and made available, giving them honoraria, paying for their travel, holding symposia. We don't want to see that you're digitizing

things only for yourself; we want to see the equitable inclusivity and centering of the community who are featured in your collection.

Q: Are letters of support from collaborating institutions required to be included in the initial applications, or only the final ones?

A: There are no letters required in initial application; no external letters of support or internal letter of commitment until you are advanced to the final round. The only upload required is the estimated budget narrative.

Q: Will you expand on the grant's focus to assist marginalized communities? Would you accept applications that focus on a historically marginalized community, such as early immigrants to America, for example, but one that is not subject to that same degree of discrimination in the present day as compared to other groups?

A: The thematic focus applies to individuals, communities, and/or populations *historically* marginalized and/or underrepresented, so if that argument can be convincingly made for your proposal to the review panel regarding the population whose story is being told it should not be disqualifying.

Q: Where can we find the sample applications you referred to earlier?

A: There are samples on the [Apply for an Award page](#) from the previous iteration, which are helpful examples, but have some differences from the current iteration's initial application. We are working to clear permissions to add a couple of applications from 2021 to better model the current application.

Q: Do you work with the Internet Archive?

A: The grants team does not work directly with any vendor or platform, host any online collections, or perform any digitization work ourselves. We solely act as the funding agency for the work.

Q: Can class projects be funded? For example, funding a project wherein students are creating an archive of new oral history. The students are not paid, but research assistants (some of which are students) are. In this project interviewees/elders are paid a stipend for their time and involvement.

A: The primary focus of the program is the digitization of extant physical objects, not the collection or creation of materials.

Q: Is it possible to collect and record oral histories and then digitize them for open access as part of this grant?

A: The primary focus of the program is the digitization of extant physical objects, not the collection or creation of materials.

Q: Do you fund a fiscal sponsored project? We collect oral histories, but not a 501c3.

A: Organizations may apply under an eligible fiscal sponsor as long as they own and hold the proposed material. Be aware that this is not a collecting grant, this grant is focused on the

digitization of materials. We recommend that you email us at hiddecollections@clir.org with more specifics on your project.

Collections

Q: Would a private collection/independent scholar be acceptable if partnered with a library, or other non-profit organization?

A: The purpose of this grant is to fund nonprofit cultural heritage organizations who may be constricted due to financial limitations, with digitization of non born digital materials. Projects focused on funding independent scholars to digitize their personal collections and projects is outside the scope of this program.

Q: Would digitizing collections from world wide historical events qualify for this funding? Tiananmen Square student protests in the Philippines 1980's etc?

A: As long as the collections are owned and held by an organization in the US or Canada, that is fine. The collections don't have to reflect specific events within those two countries.

Q: Does a collection of production film material (negatives, outtakes, trims, prints, etc.) for an independent documentary, the subject of which would fall into the mission of this grant, qualify as a collection? The grant would be used for digital preservation and access files for these materials.

A: If they are held by an eligible organization, from the format description I don't see any reason why they wouldn't be a viable collection.

Q: Would transcription of handwritten documents that require community-specific and shorthand knowledge to transcribe be eligible for funding, even if the handwritten documents have been scanned into digital PDFs?

A: The program is limited to the digitization of physical objects, so it can be used to digitize handwritten documents, but it cannot be used to reformat already created PDFs. This program only allows the digitization of non born digital documents.

Q: Can select specific items be digitized rather than entire collections - in, especially important representative samples?

A: Yes, applicants can define the terms of a collection and curate within their broader holdings as needed to meet the program's scope and restrictions. Sometimes the entire collection can't be done in 1-3 years. It's up to you to pick what's most important from collection/nominated materials. They may also apply as a phased project, where they identify a portion of their collection to digitize through the grant, with the clear intention of pursuing additional funds to complete a broader project in stages. Sometimes people apply for another round, after their project has been completed to expand upon the collection. It's very individual based on the type of materials you have, your staffing, your equipment and your project's needs. Reviewers want your project to make sense fiscally and resource-wise.

Q: We have already digitized a large percentage of a collection, but would like to apply for this grant to digitize the remainder of the collection and make digitized items publicly

available online, along with improving our digitization workflow with the help of a contract archivist. Would completing an already started digitization project be eligible?

A: Yes, there is no prohibition against applying for funding for a particular stage of a broader project as long as all deliverables of the CLIR funded portion can be completed by the end of the grant term (maximum of 3 years).

Rights, Ethics and Re-Use

Q: Is it acceptable to propose a project where some items may be made publicly accessible on the Internet, but potentially a large number of items would be made available to the communities represented and/or researchers by request, e.g., field notes, letters, and items where copyright cannot be determined.

A: As stated earlier, we do use an independent review panel with a lot of experience evaluating these proposals. We've had proposals with larger numbers of restricted items due to the nature of the materials, whether for cultural sensitivity or privacy reasons. The panel understands there can be a need for that, but it needs to be clearly explained in the application, detailing approximately what percentage of materials will be restricted and why.

Q: Is making accessible to the public just the metadata sufficient?

A: It is unusual for entire projects to have restricted access, but it is not unprecedented. A compelling case would need to be made to the panel for the reasoning behind a full public restriction, as well as a description of who will be granted access and how and any fees that may be added to the access.

Budget and Finance

Q: If a third-party scholar is working on the project, can they receive a payment? If so, would that be a stipend or consulting fee? Can they be designated as a PI?

A: The answer is yes to all these questions. Whether it's designated as a stipend or consulting fee or they're identified as a subcontractor is determined by the structure of your proposal and the nature of the work they're doing. For instance, are they acting as a consultant to you, or are they acting as more of a digitization vendor contractor? They can be designated as PI, but we prefer the primary PI be from the lead applicant institution. Each project can have up to three named PIs.

Q: Can a scholar connected to the community receive travel funds to provide outreach with the community? Can the grant include funds for a community outreach event, e.g., a showing and overview of the digitized materials?

A: Yes, part of authentic partnerships allows for money for these types of events. We do want details on your planned outreach and what it will entail: showings, small symposia, etc. You can include that in your budget in the form of providing honoraria to community partners, getting elders and scholars to and from the organization or to the collections. If you want to include travel to participate at a conference to present your project, that is limited to \$7,500.

Q: Thank you for inviting us to learn about this opportunity! For smaller institutions, can the grant funds be put toward contract positions for additional hands and assistance?

A: Yes. Some may be more familiar with our other program *Recordings at Risk* which requires a digitization vendor. There is more flexibility within *Digitizing Hidden Collections* to do the work as needed. There is no limitation on bringing in contract/term employees to do digitization in-house if you don't have capacity already on staff.

Q:What kinds of things do organizations use the money for?

A: The primary purpose of this program is to assist organizations with digitization of non born digital materials. Some organizations use the money to supplement salaries. For example if your archivist or collection manager are using a % of their time to work on this project, they may include FTE of 25% + fringe benefits for the duration of the project specified in the application (1-3 years). Sometimes an organization may use an outside digitization vendor, or a combination of in-house digitization and outside vendor due to material formats and equipment constraints. Outside vendor costs will fall under "services" in your budget. Some organizations also use funds for outreach programming, metadata creation, and the salaries attached to metadata creation. Funds can be spent on transcription, equipment and supplies necessary for the project (e.g. scanners, laptops). Equipment and supplies can not exceed \$15,000. I recommend viewing [Appendix A](#) of our [Application Guidelines](#) for more information.

Q: We are interested in obtaining a 3D scanner and scanning artifacts that are currently on exhibit in order to expand our accessibility (both remote access and for those with disabilities). Are there parts of a project like that we should leave out of the application? Staff time vs. hardware costs. Things like that.

A: Not necessarily. If they're all relevant to the project, and you can justify their relationship to the digitization and accessibility of the materials, you can include them in your application. We do have limits for some of these categories. We have a \$15,000 equipment and supplies limit. That may be an area you want to do a cost share. There's not necessarily one strategy to build out your budget because each project is specific in relation to organizational types, materials, and capacity. We recommend you explain your costs in detail in your [Budget Narrative](#) for the reviewers.

Q: Would creation of a public-facing digital exhibit that features both newly digitized materials *and* previously digitized materials be an allowable cost?

A: I believe so, if the focus is featuring the newly digitized materials. We recommend you send an email to hidencollections@clir.org with the specifics so we can answer the question in greater detail.

Q: Our project will focus on 18th century documents many of which are handwritten and require transcription to increase accessibility. Would we be allowed to include the transcription consultant fees in the budget?

A: Allowable. Those fees should be added as a service in your budget. We require a quote from any service vendor if the total is over \$5,000.

Q: Does a minimum percentage of the project budget need to be dedicated solely to digitization costs?

A: Unlike with *Recordings At Risk*, there's no set threshold. But we do want the focus of the program to remain on digitization, and other activities to be supplementary or secondary to digitization. It's harder to maintain a 50% threshold with this program, but we do want the bulk of the awarded funds to be dedicated to digitization of materials.

Q: When showing a bulk of funds are going to digitization, does this include salaries for staff doing the work? Can they be an Independent Contractor? Or an actual staff member of the non profit?

A: Either option is allowable depending on the needs of your project and your already existing staff capacity. If you have qualified staff that can do the work in-house then that will be represented through salary, a short-term hire might be salary or a subcontractor fee or consultant fee, or you may opt to use an outside vendor entirely. The choice is yours, but should be explained as a part of your budget narrative. Visit the [Application Guidelines](#) for more detailed budget instructions.

Q: If we would like to pay an honorarium to a community, whose materials are represented, can we also get a letter of support from them?

A: You may not get a letter of support from an *individual* that will be paid with project funds. If you are working with a broader community, it may make sense to designate an advisory board within that community that you will be working with and compensating, and look for a letter writer from within the community, but outside of the advisory board.

Q: Can rehousing negatives for digitization be included in the budget?

A: Yes, re-housing and storage supplies are an allowable cost under the Equipment & Supplies category, and that sounds like part of the workflow necessary to complete digitization.

Project Design

Q: Does the applicant have to use an outside service to do the digitization, or if they have the technology, skills and experience in-house, will the program support the applicant doing the digitization themselves?

A: Yes, there are plenty of large-capacity institutions that have received grants through this program that do their digitization in-house. We primarily see that represented in their budget in staff costs rather than vendor costs (e.g. if they have a digital archivist already on staff). We don't dictate that for this program. It's what works best for your organization and the collection.

Q: Given the new DOJ accessibility regulations, can the grant be applied to create transcriptions and audio descriptions for AV material digitized under the grant?

A: Yes. This would probably be an allowable cost dependent upon how you design your work plan if this is part of processing the digital materials. As long as it is part of the preparation of the digitization of the nominated materials and not an extensive percentage of your budget. We have seen this frequently in projects of this program, since the materials represent unheard voices and we encourage accessibility.

Q: Would an exhibition be considered a reasonable outreach activity or is that outside the scope? That section was not clear to me in the provided materials.

A: Yes, an exhibition is acceptable outreach. We don't fund general supplies (like cases) but we would fund an exhibition as outreach for this specific collection.

Q: For projects from educational institutions, do you encourage student (UG, grad, pre-doc) involvement in the scope of work?

A: Our review panel looks favorably on student involvement and providing training for future generations of GLAM professionals. We recommend ensuring the pay you offer is equitable. That's a big factor for our reviewers. As a reminder, we do not cover tuition waivers.

Q: For small organizations, not affiliated with university repositories, are there any platforms your grantees commonly work with, such as Internet Archives?

A: Most commonly, smaller grantees have made more subject- or region-specific relationships with larger platforms. Two examples that come to mind are a number of our Indigenous grantees are utilizing the Plateau Peoples Portal, and a number of our Californian recipients are a part of California Revealed. There may be more tailored options available based on your collection and location, but we have had grantees that worked with large platforms like Internet Archive and the Library of Congress.

Q: What would be considered a reasonable target for digitizing objects in proportion to the total number of objects in the collection?

A: There is no target set by CLIR in regards to what you are digitizing as a proportion of your larger organizational holdings, which we will likely not be familiar with on an applicant-to-applicant basis. The review panel is more concerned with the relationship between the amount of funds requested and the amount of work being done, and that the primary grant activity is digitization.

Q: If part of the digitized materials is music, would public performances and/or conferences on this material be considered under outreach?

A: This is an acceptable form of public outreach. Ensure that you explain how this public performance builds inclusivity across organizational and geographic boundaries. As a reminder, I encourage you to review [Appendix A](#) of our [Initial Application Guidelines](#) for information on allowed and disallowed costs.

Collaboration

Q: Does the lead applicant institution need to be the actual holder/owner of the archival materials to be digitized? Or can it be an institution that leads and implements digitization of other entities' archival collections? May a project include digitization of important material held and owned by small local museums and community groups that have nonprofit status, but may not archive the materials in conformity with professional standards?

A: They can be either. This program is designed to hold space for collaborative projects. An example from AUV 1, the lead org is Washington State, but they have I believe 16 collaborators,

9 tribal orgs and some other universities through the Plateau Peoples Portal. They are administering the project and acting as the lead, but they have several partners. We are looking for those authentic partnerships.

Q: Can two groups from the same institution apply? Or is it one application per institution?

A: Sometimes we have large campuses like the University of California system, that may have a library and a museum. Yes, two groups from the institution can apply. If they have the same EIN number and both make it to the final round, we would ask one to withdraw. Some universities have multiple libraries with different EINs and geographic locations. This comes up with very large universities with either branch campuses or distinct schools within their schools. If they have different EINs we will allow both applications and possible funding. The grants team will notify you if we have too many from the same institution and someone needs to withdraw. If you have a specific organization you want us to check please email us at hiddencollections@clir.org and we will tell you.

Q: Can a non-profit organization be the applicant, partnering with historic church congregations to digitize their collections? Is there any restriction on faith-based organizations being direct or indirect recipients? The primary applicant would be the non-profit that would likely be organizing and executing the digitization.

A: We would want partner congregations to be represented in the proposal as collaborating organizations. This program does not have a limit on the number of collaborating partners an application may have. The majority of faith-based orgs in the US are 501(c)3 nonprofits and we don't have any rule barring faith-based organizations from receiving funding. Both *Digitizing Hidden Collections: Amplifying Unheard Voices* and *Recordings At Risk* have funded faith-based applicants in the past.

Q: Do you fund a fiscal sponsored project? We collect oral histories, but not a 501c3.

A: Organizations may apply under an eligible fiscal sponsor as long as they own and hold the proposed material. Be aware that this is not a collecting grant, this grant is focused on the digitization of materials. We recommend that you email us at hiddencollections@clir.org with more specifics on your project.

Review Process

Q: How many have shown up today? How many grants do you give versus rejections?

A: There are over 100 attendees in this current webinar. The number of grants given versus rejections varies because the award size is so variable, from \$50,000-\$300,000. It depends on the pool. Last year we were able to invite approximately 50 forward to the final application stage from an initial pool of ~130, but these numbers change every year.

Q: What are the most important eligibility criteria for large-scale applications (~\$300,000)? For example, is weight given to:

- additional donors?
- proof of team expertise?

- **scope of accompanying outreach activities? etc..**

A: We use an independent review panel made up of experts in the field. Each individual project is so different that it's hard to state a general rule. When looking at your budget narrative, panelists want to know your budget makes sense in relation to your proposed project. Although the primary focus of this program is digitization, the [Core Values](#) should be present throughout the application. Does the subject matter have not just local but broad transnational appeal and importance? Does your work plan match the size and digitization requirements of your collection? Reviewers want to see you're telling a compelling story about this collection and why it's necessary for the work of scholars and researchers in the field. They want to see these materials available to the public online, and that your work plan makes sense fiscally.

Q: What percentage of those forwarded to the final round are generally funded? And of those 50 finalists last year, roughly how many received the grant?

Also: Do you award partial grants (if someone requests 300,000, would you award just \$150,000?)

A: It really depends on how many people apply, how many make it to the final round, and how much those apps are requesting. If everyone asks for \$300,000, the funding rate will be low. If we have more applications asking for less, our funding rate will go up. We hope to fund as many people as possible. We haven't announced anything about the last cycle yet, so we can't answer questions on that funding rate. We try to avoid contingent/partial funding. We do allow and encourage cost-sharing, such as covering salaries.