

INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Making a Case for Support: Collections Stewardship Projects

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American National Bank, Federal Building, interior, vault, 1937 (Bass Photo Co. Collection, Indiana Historical Society)

Making the case for support for collections stewardship is much like any other funding ask. Identify the need, explain your solution(s), and demonstrate how you will implement those solutions. For collections, it's important to give some collections-specific information to show potential funders that you understand what's in your collections and what appropriate care for those collections is. The following information can help you prepare for writing collections-related grant proposals as well as for developing all types of funding requests for collections projects.

Provide details about your collection. Tell potential funders approximately how many and what kinds of objects are in your collections, what percentage of objects are catalogued, and whether you have any special collections that require specific types of care. Give information about how you've determined what's in your collections and how you track your objects – collection inventories, collections tracking processes, collections management systems, etc. This lets them know that you have taken a good look at your collections, understand your needs, and are asking for funding based on actual data.

If you've had any collections assessments and/or have included collections stewardship in your long-range planning, provide that information. Let anyone reading your case for support know how you've addressed or plan to address recommendations for improvement and movement toward collections stewardship goals.

Include your collections plan and policies. If you don't have current plans and/or policies, let possible funders know of any plans you have for developing, reviewing, and revising your collections-related documents. Potential funders often look for evidence of organizational and project sustainability. Show them that you have taken the long-term needs of your collections into consideration.

Add information about any facilities and environmental information that may impact collections. Include any data collected in collections storage and exhibits areas. If you have longitudinal information from environmental monitoring systems, add it to the proposal and explain how it's been used to determine needs and adjust the collections envelope. If you don't have environmental data, consider requesting funding to purchase it and address how it will strengthen your ability to care for your objects.

Let potential funders know about staff and volunteer knowledge about and experience with collections. If the staff and volunteers lack that knowledge and experience, explain plans for training. If the project includes bringing in a contractor to work on the project, tell funders how the project will be maintained after the contractor has completed the work. Consider adding staff and volunteer training time and goals in the request for funding.

Remember that one of the keys to successful collections stewardship fundraising is to provide the potential donor with enough information that they understand your collections care needs and the ways in which the funds will help you meet those needs.

Resources

- [Capitalize on Collections Care](#) (Heritage Preservation and the Institute for Museum and Library Services)
- [Fundraising for Collections Care](#) (Connecting to Collections Care)
- [Fundraising for Conservation and Preservation Projects](#) (The Sustainable Heritage Network)

Further Resources

- [Collections Advisors](#) (Indiana Historical Society)
- [Timely Tips](#) (Indiana Historical Society)

Collection Trainings

[Archival Loans](#)

Feb. 2 (Backlog)

[Indigenous Collections Care Speaker Series: Intellectual Care of Collections](#)

Feb. 3 (Gilcrease Museum)

[Handling Book and Paper-Based Collections: A Primer for Staff, Interns, & Volunteers](#)

Feb. 4 (NEDCC)

[Archives 101: Getting Started](#)

Feb. 10 (NEDCC)

[Getting Started with Obsolete Media](#)

Feb. 17 (Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts)

Recorded Webinars

- [Connecting to Collections Care](#)
- [Indiana Historical Society](#)
- [Texas Historical Commission](#)

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