

IMLS Office of Museum Services Funding

Request

We urge Congress to:

- provide at least \$55.5 million for FY 2024 funding (level with current FY 2023) and at least \$65.5 million for FY 2025 funding for the IMLS Office of Museum Services, a much needed increase accounting for inflation and public need for museum services.

Introduction

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the primary federal agency responsible for helping museums connect people to information and ideas. Its Office of Museum Services (OMS) supports all types of museums—including aquariums, arboretums, art museums, botanical gardens, children’s museums, culturally-specific museums, historic sites, history museums, military museums, natural history museums, nature centers, planetariums, railway museums, science and technology centers, zoos, and more—by awarding grants that help them educate students, preserve and digitize collections, and connect with their communities. Despite its small size, the IMLS Office of Museum Services is the largest dedicated source of investment in our nation’s museums. OMS leadership and vital financial support is more important than ever to museums of every type, large and small, urban and rural, across our country. OMS provides museums essential support to navigate change and continue to improve their services to better enable them to champion lifelong learning, strengthen community engagement and advance collections stewardship and access to our nation’s cultural heritage.

Status

- The Office of Museum Services within IMLS is funded through the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. It is currently funded at \$55.5 million (FY 2023 level). The House Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee in July approved a bill providing level funding for IMLS for FY 2024 while the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a bill that would cut \$3.25 million from OMS museum programs.

Talking Points

- The Institute of Museum and Library Services has strong bipartisan support, and has been lauded for its peer-reviewed, highly competitive grant programs.
- OMS has set a strong record of congressional support during the appropriations submission process in each of the last several years, with 113 Representatives and 41 Senators signing FY 2024 appropriations letters on its behalf.
- In FY 2023, Congress provided \$295 million to IMLS, of which \$55.5 million was directed to the Office of Museum Services. With this funding, OMS provided 317 grants totaling \$53 million to museums and related organizations in 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
- By leveraging significant private, state, and local funding, OMS grants amplify a small federal investment for maximum impact in the community.

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- There is high demand for funding from the IMLS Office of Museum Services. In FY 2023 OMS received 749 applications requesting more than \$122 million, but current funding has allowed the agency to fund less than half (40%) of the highly rated grant applications it receives.
- \$65.5 million or more in FY 2025 funding would allow OMS to increase its grant capacity for museums, funds which museums will need to help continue to serve their communities. This important funding increase would still be greatly shy of the high demand of \$122 million in FY 2023 in highly rated grant applications the agency received.
- The Inspire! Grants for Small Museums program, designed to encourage small institutions to apply for IMLS funding, generated 216 applications in FY 2023. IMLS made awards to 59 museums through this program, demonstrating a continuing need for support for the nation’s small museums.
- In 2014, IMLS launched Museums for All, a national access initiative. Today, more than 1,200 participating museums in 50 states, DC, and the US Virgin Islands offer deeply discounted admission to visitors who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The program has reached over 8 million visitors.
- OMS provides critical funding for professional development to improve the recruitment, preparation, and professional development of museum professionals, especially those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.
- In 2018, legislation reauthorizing IMLS passed Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support by unanimous consent in the Senate and by a vote of 331 to 28 in the House, showing Congress’ continued support for the agency’s programs and a renewed commitment to its funding.
- To learn more about grants awarded to museums in your state or district, visit: [Advanced Search | Institute of Museum and Library Services](#).

Additional Information About Museums

- [Museums are economic engines](#), prior to the pandemic, supporting more than 726,000 jobs and contributing \$50 billion to the US economy per year. They attract tourists, promote economic development, and make communities more desirable for employers.
- Museums’ economic impact generates \$12 billion in tax revenue at all levels of government.

IMLS Office of Museum Services Funding History

Appropriation
(in millions)

FY 12	\$30.9
FY 13 CR*	\$30.9
FY 14	\$30.1
FY 15	\$31.3
FY 16	\$31.3
FY 17	\$31.7
FY 18	\$34.7
FY 19	\$34.7
FY 20	\$34.7
FY 21	\$40.5
FY 22	\$47.5
FY 23	\$55.5
FY 24	TBD

**In FY 2013, across the board sequestration cuts reduced OMS’ effective funding to \$29.2 million.*

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- Museums have strong public support: [Museums and Public Opinion](#), a 2017 national public opinion poll, showed that 96% of voters would approve of lawmakers who acted to support museums and 96% want federal funding for museums to be maintained or increased.
- Museums are an important part of the nation's educational system, spending more than \$2 billion a year on education and promoting lifelong learning. Museums receive more than 55 million visits each year from student groups.
- Children who visited a museum during kindergarten had higher achievement scores in reading, mathematics, and science in third grade than children who did not.
- Museums are essential community infrastructure, attracting over a million volunteer hours every week, prior to the pandemic.
- Many museums have developed innovative programs to meet the growing needs of their individual communities. For example, some museums have programs designed specifically for children with special needs and their families, some work with medical schools to teach observation and description skills, and some are helping veterans heal from their wounds, both physical and psychological.