

MUSEUM on Main Street

Exhibition Starter Kits

The Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street program is pleased to announce this call for applications to select five organizations to participate in its 2021 Exhibition Starter Kit: WORK project. The unique Exhibition Starter Kits provide a Smithsonian-developed framework around which venues will develop their own local humanities-based exhibitions using their own collections and cultural content. Want to create a long-term local exhibition in association with the Smithsonian? *Starter Kit: WORK* offers an opportunity for prior Museum on Main Street hosts and other rural cultural organizations to apply for this exciting partnership.

The Big Idea

Exhibition Starter Kits give local organizations a great opportunity to use Smithsonian exhibition content as a device for giving national context to local exhibitions. Host museums use exhibition support materials and a guided script to create an integrated, seamless presentation of both national and local content.



Installation of *Starter Kit: WORK* at the Hart Cluett Museum, Troy, NY

Exhibition Starter Kits for Small Museums

Drawing on content from past MoMS exhibitions, Starter Kits are organized to help small museums develop great local exhibitions. They embrace the power of local history and culture by providing a set of tools created by the Smithsonian that leverage local culture, creativity, and artistic expression.

MoMS provides the curatorial framework for the exhibition, including graphic designed exhibit panels, and a selection of optional images and quotes. Host museums add additional content—such as historical images, art and artifacts, video clips, and quotes from oral histories—that highlights their local history and culture.

The build-it-yourself concept helps communities preserve their past by presenting it in the most relevant way to their constituents. Smithsonian staff will provide assistance throughout the exhibition development process for each host venue.

MoMS is now accepting applications to select five venues to develop local exhibitions using an Exhibition Starter Kit based on the topic of work. A description of Starter Kit: WORK, criteria for selection, and an application are attached.

Applications are due by January 8, 2021.

Starter Kit: WORK

Starter Kit: WORK is based on the MoMS exhibition *The Way We Worked*, which was originally adapted from a National Archives exhibition. Known for their strong work ethic, Americans invest themselves physically, emotionally, and intellectually in their work – and this can be seen in the diverse jobs and workforce. The provided exhibition framework explores how work became such a central element in American culture by tracing changes that affected the workforce and work environments like the Industrial Revolution, changing women’s roles, Civil Rights, and the impact of technology and advanced communications. The Starter Kit offers a multi-faceted template for local cultural professionals to learn about the exhibition development process used by MoMS. By incorporating local elements directly into the exhibition, each installation will be unique while broadly addressing the same national themes.



Man working on hull of U.S. Submarine at Electric Boat Co., Groton, Conn. Photo by Fenno Jacobs, August 1943; National Archives, General Records of the U.S. Navy, 1789-1947

Package Offerings

Starter Kit: WORK offers a suite of items and instructions for developing an exhibition including:

- Digital files for 15 curated text panels with a national scope related to work history
- 30 reproducible sample photographs to supplement local collections
- Digital audio-visual content relevant to the exhibition theme (no hardware provided)
- Graphic package of design elements (such as logos, paint colors, and instructions)
- Sample quotes for printing on vinyl for wall applications and vinyl application instructions
- Suggestions for local research, story collection and suggested list of artifacts to include

The cost for the package is \$1000 with a \$250 discount for venues that have hosted a Museum on Main Street exhibition in the past. Local production costs for exhibitions are the responsibility of venues and are expected to start at around \$2000. Venue costs will vary greatly depending on selected design components, chosen materials and labor cost associated with production.

What is the role of local venues?

Each local venue will be responsible for fabricating the exhibition utilizing the skeletal Smithsonian script and design instructions as a guide, but the goal is for the host venue to add local content to the exhibition topic that enriches the local experience for the visitors.

Venues will work directly with Smithsonian staff to develop their own local script and exhibition plan. No on-site Smithsonian and/or Museum on Main Street programming or training is offered with these packages. However, state humanities councils may choose to offer program grants to museums on a case-by-case basis.

Interested or want to find out more? Please contact: Selwyn Ramp, MoMS Assistant Project Director, at ramps@si.edu or 202.633.7711.

Who is eligible to host the exhibit?

Non-profit organizations, government and affiliated organizations (museums, historical societies, libraries, preservation groups, downtown development groups or chambers of commerce) located in communities with populations of approximately 20,000 or less are invited to apply.

What are the venue requirements for the exhibit?

- Handicap accessible with bathroom facilities for visitors
- At least 25 hours per week of public operating hours
- A venue cannot charge a special fee to visit this exhibition in addition to their regular admission fee

What is provided for selected host organizations?

- Step-by-step assistance through the exhibition development process by Smithsonian representatives
- Digital files for curated text panels with a national scope related to work history
- Graphic package of design elements (including logos, colors, design templates)
- Digital audio-visual content relevant to the exhibition theme (no hardware provided)
- Script template for the purpose of developing your local exhibition
- Sample quotes for printing on vinyl for wall applications and vinyl application instructions
- Instruction guide providing suggestions for local research, story collection and potential artifacts

What are the host organization's responsibilities?

- Develop the local script and exhibition plan using templates provided by the Smithsonian
- Combine items from the provided package with local resources to create the local experience
- Submit each completed phase for approval to your Smithsonian representative
- Fabricate the exhibition utilizing the approved script and exhibition plan
- Plan and implement community programs on the theme of the exhibit. These programs should serve a broad public audience
- Develop a network of partners in your community and region to promote the exhibit and enhance audience development
- Organize a committee to support programming related to the exhibition
- Submit required information about planned public programs to SITES
- Inform your Smithsonian representative of opening and closing dates

What are the criteria for selection?

- **Geography and Organization Size** – Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street is a nationwide program that exists to serve small and underserved communities through exhibitions that highlight local culture and history. Our intent is to serve as many different parts of the country as possible through small organizations.
- **Timing** – Host organizations will be selected on their ability to develop and fabricate their project in about 15 months. Local exhibitions can be scheduled for public display through December 30, 2025.
- **Project Objectives** - The fit between the starter kit topic and the community’s cultural assets will be an important consideration. Selections will be based on the strength of stated project objectives and a demonstrated relevance to the starter kit framework in a host community, and/or within their organization. Additional consideration will be given to projects with rich humanities-based cultural programming beyond the exhibition.
- **Collaboration and Support** - Preference will be given to communities that show evidence of a network of organizations collaborating to produce and showcase the exhibit locally. Additional preference will be given to organizations that are providing a letter of support from their state humanities council or other statewide MoMS partners.

How do I become a host organization?

Museum on Main Street is accepting applications through January 8, 2021.

Non-profit and government-affiliated organizations interested in creating a local exhibition about work using *Starter Kit: WORK* are invited to apply. Host venue selections will be made by January 15 for five venues to develop exhibitions and organize complementary public programming.

The application on the following pages can be completed digitally and emailed to ramps@si.edu. Organizations are encouraged to contact anyone on the MoMS team to discuss program objectives before submitting their application. Please attach any supporting documentation to the same email as the application.

APPLICATION
Museum on Main Street Starter Kit: WORK

Geography and Organization:

Name of Host Organization: _____

Applicant Name: _____

Applicant Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____

E-Mail Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Type of host organization:

Museum Library Historical Organization / Society Community Center

School / College Other: _____

Number of paid staff: _____, equal to _____ full time equivalent (FTE)

Number of volunteer staff: _____, equal to _____ full time equivalent (FTE)

Total population of your town: _____

What are your operating hours? _____

Will you have staff or volunteers available to interact with visitors? _____

What is the amount of gallery space available for this exhibition (linear ft. and/or square ft.):

Are you a former Museum on Main Street host? YES / NO

If yes, which exhibition and year you hosted? _____

Timing:

Describe your process for developing the exhibition. What is your process for conceptual development? How long do you expect to take to develop content and produce your exhibition? When will you open it to visitors and how long would you keep it on display?

Project Objectives:

Describe the core elements of the exhibition you want to create. How will you reflect your community's diversity in your exhibition? Who can best tell those stories? What types of collections do you intend to use in your exhibition (objects, photographs, audio stories, or videos)?

How will you present your content? If you do not already have access to the research or collection items you need to interpret your stories, how will you obtain them (loan, purchase, oral history interviews, videography, etc.)?

What types of humanities-based programming do you intend to create to complement the exhibition?

Collaboration and Support:

What do you hope to achieve by developing this exhibition? Why is there a special need in your community for cultural programming related to work? What community partners do you expect to work with for the development and display of this exhibition and related cultural programming? What type of collaborations do you expect to forge through this project? Are you receiving any support from your state humanities council or other statewide MoMS partners? (Attach any letters of support to the submission email.)

Other Thoughts and Comments

Is there anything else you want us to consider? Is there anything we forgot to ask?