



MetLife Foundation



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AAM's Center for the Future of Museums, EmcArts and MetLife Foundation Launch Innovation Lab for Museums Proposals Sought for New Program Designed to Foster Innovative Approaches to Challenges Facing America's Museums

RFP Released, Proposals will be accepted through October 31, 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C. September 19, 2011 — The American Association of Museums's (AAM) Center for the Future of Museums, EmcArts and MetLife Foundation announce the launch of a major new initiative designed to enable selected museums to design, research and prototype innovations, testing novel approaches to field-wide challenges in a laboratory-like setting. The initiative is entitled the Innovation Lab for Museums, and is now accepting proposals at www.aam-us.org and www.EmcArts.org. The deadline for proposals is October 31, 2011.

The first round of the Innovation Lab for Museums is generously funded by a \$500,000 grant from MetLife Foundation, a long-time supporter of the nation's museum community.

The Innovation Lab for Museums will be an 18 to 24-month program for each of the participating institutions, utilizing the expertise of CFM and the proven experience of EmcArts in incubating organizational innovations in the arts field. In this inaugural round of the Lab, three proposals will be accepted and preference will be given to projects focusing on innovation in the realms of:

- **Youth Education:** exploring how museums can play a key role in a rapidly changing educational landscape
- **Demographic Transformation:** how museums can close this gap and serve a broader, more representative sample of American society
- **Participatory Experiences:** how museums can meet the desire of audiences for participatory and social activities in museums.

Proposals will be judged on evidence that applicants have clearly defined a major challenge and begun to develop responses to that challenge, on each applicant's readiness for and ability to support innovative change, their current level of community engagement, the likely value of the innovation to the organization and the field, and the capacity of the applicant to share what they learn through participating in the Lab.

"The rapid pace of change in the 21st century makes it imperative that museums experiment with new ways of operating," said Elizabeth Merritt, director of the Center for the Future of Museums. "Historically, the museum field has encouraged organizations to stick to tried-and-true standards and best practices. AAM sees the Innovation Lab for Museums as a significant way to encourage and reward museums that are willing to take risks, try new things and pursue a new path for the rest of the field."

The Innovation Lab for Museums has four phases:

Phase 1 – Each museum identifies a dedicated Innovation Team, which then works with EmcArts to explore new approaches, define project goals and success measures, and conduct pertinent research over four months.

Phase 2 – Innovation Teams from all participating museums attend a 5-day Intensive Residential Retreat that serves as a "project accelerator," giving teams time to focus on key decisions about their projects.

Phase 3 – The Lab grants participants \$40,000 in seed money to support the prototyping and evaluation of innovative strategies over six months, before full launch.

Phase 4 – The Innovation Team and each organization's leadership works to leverage lessons learned, embed them in the organization's ongoing approach, and share learning with the field.

The program will build on EmcArts' tested framework for fostering nonprofit innovation. Piloted in 2005 as the *New Strategies Lab for Orchestras* (funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation), EmcArts' flagship program grew into the *Innovation Lab for the Performing Arts* (supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation), which has now been in operation for four years. Reports from

participants have confirmed the deep impact of the program, and external evaluation has established its unique value to the arts field.

CFM and EmcArts foresee similar success for the Innovation Lab for Museums.

“The Innovation Lab for Museums will benefit not only the organizations accepted into the program, but the museum field as a whole,” notes Richard Evans, President of EmcArts. “Successful innovations developed by participants may go mainstream, becoming leading practices of the future. And the cumulative experience of Lab participants will help museums break down internal barriers to innovation, creating organizational cultures that are perpetually ready for adaptive change.”

Results from the Innovation Lab for Museums will be documented, summarized and shared with the museum community, ensuring it can guide museum planning and inform the development of standards and new practices. The knowledge derived from this national program will benefit AAM members, the national museum community of over 17,500 museums, and the international museum community.

“MetLife Foundation has a longstanding commitment to promoting the vitality of our national museum community,” said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. “We are proud to partner with these two organizations to find innovative ways to bring young people and community members from all different demographics to the rich landscape that is American museums.”

For questions or additional information, contact: Dewey Blanton, American Association of Museums, (202) 218.7704, DBlanton@aam-us.org; Liz Dreyer, EmcArts, (212) 362.8541, LDreyer@EmcArts.org; or Peggy Atherlay, MetLife Foundation, (212) 578.1525, matherlay@metlife.com.

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About EmcArts

Recognized as the leading not-for-profit provider of innovation services to the arts and culture sector nationwide, EmcArts (www.EmcArts.org) serves as an intermediary partner for arts and culture funders, and as a re-granting agency and service organization for the arts and culture field around innovation. Our innovation programs support the development and implementation of mission-centered new strategies by cultural organizations of all sizes. The programs range from directly incubating specific innovation projects to introductory programs that enable new thinking and build a culture of innovation across local cultural communities. EmcArts is a 501(c)(3) organization.

About the Center for the Future of Museums

The Center for the Future of Museums (CFM) helps museums explore the cultural, political and economic challenges facing society and devise strategies to shape a better tomorrow. CFM is a think-tank and research and design lab for fostering creativity and helping museums transcend traditional boundaries to serve society in new ways. For more information, visit www.futureofmuseums.org.

About AAM

The American Association of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. With more than 18,000 individual, 3,000 institutional and 300 corporate members, AAM is dedicated to ensuring that museums remain a vital part of the American landscape, connecting people with the greatest achievements of the human experience, past, present and future. For more information, visit www.aam-us.org.

About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 to carry on MetLife's longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement.

The Foundation is committed to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide. Through programs focusing on empowering older adults, preparing young people and building livable communities, MetLife Foundation increases access and opportunities for people of all ages. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has made more than \$500 million in grants and \$75 million in program related investments. For more information visit www.metlife.org