

Subject: New submission ALBANY Arts, Culture, and Tourism Application**Date:** Thursday, June 29, 2023 at 8:27:36 PM Eastern Daylight Time**From:** jnytko@govsol.org**To:** jnytko@govsol.org

General Information
Date of application
06/28/2023
Name of Entity
Irish American Heritage Museum
Entity TIN, EIN or Social Security Number
22-2880959
Entity physical address
21 Quackenbush Square Albany, NY 12207 United States Map It
Is the physical address different from the mailing address?
No
Website (if available)
https://irish-us.org/
Primary Contact Information
Primary contact name
Elizabeth Stack
Primary contact title
Executive Director
Primary contact phone
(518) 427-1916
Primary contact email
estack@irish-us.org
What is the primary contacts preferred method of contact?
Either
Entity Info and Structure
Which structure best describes the entity?
Non-profit organization
What is the date of establishment?
1986

If applicable, is the entity a W/MAM (Minority or Women-Owned Business Entity)?

No

Have you or the entity ever received any form of COVID-19 relief funds or loans specific to the negative impacts of the Pandemic?

Yes

If "Yes" above, please specify the type(s) and amount(s).

Paycheck Protection Program \$26,000 (two separate payments.)
Shuttered Venue Grant of \$55,000
IMLS Cares \$34,000

General Project Information

Describe the arts/cultural/tourism activities your organization provides in Albany County.

The Irish American Heritage Museum is a 501(c)3 nonprofit created by the New York State Legislature in 1986 and permanently chartered by the Board of Regents of New York as an educational institution in 1992. We explore the contributions, history, and culture of Irish people in America, and foster dialogue and exchange between America and Ireland today. By sharing our stories, we strive to create connections and community between all Americans, as we appreciate and study the universality of the immigrant story in American history.

Through both a permanent collection and a series of changing exhibitions, the Museum displays artifacts, recounts first-person stories, and explores the history of a variety of Irish immigrants and individuals with Irish heritage, from U.S. presidents and cultural icons to nameless soldiers and factory workers. The collection includes artifacts belonging to Irish American organizations, historic costumes, devotional items, and music recordings. The IAHM is the repository for the National Board of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (an Irish fraternal order) records and collections. The permanent galleries of the Museum include full-size reconstructions of an Irish cottage and a tenement apartment, supported by an ESP grant and a scale model of a workhouse. The IAHM Library has an extensive collection of books, archival materials, and records which is open to the public, and once a month a genealogist is on site to help visitors work on their family trees and trace any Irish heritage.

The IAHM's robust series of programming includes lectures, musical performances, cooking demonstrations and tastings, film screenings, plays and staged readings, and more. Most programs are available both in-person and virtually, which allows us to reach viewers across the entire United States and in Ireland. Annual in-person events and celebrations include the Irish Soda Bread Competition, 5k Sweat-er Run, and St. Patrick's Day Family Fest, as well as the Brendan Fahy Bequette Documentary Series, a monthly film club, and several live music and theatrical performances. Most of our lectures are free and open to the public, while the proceeds of ticket sales go directly to the artist or performer.

If an award is made, describe how Albany County will benefit. Where possible, please quantify impact.

The goal of this initiative is not merely to return to a pre-pandemic state, but to move the IAHM into a new phase of growth, increasing visitation and online engagement, stimulating income, and doing more for our community through diverse, unique, and enjoyable public programming. Our mission is to "preserve and tell the story of the contributions of the Irish people and their culture in America, inspiring all to examine their own heritage," and we are ready to explore new ways in which to do this through dynamic programming, reinvestment in our collection, strengthening our staff, and, as always, building connections with our community.

We anticipate that with a newly improved theater, we will be able to hold different types of events, and host more people. Our theater was originally designed as a planetarium, and while we have made do with the structure and limited seating for the past three years, it has inhibited the acts we can host, as well as the size of the audience. There is a new hotel being built next door to us, and we plan on partnering with them to offer special discounts to their guests. We also intend to encourage classes and senior groups to visit us, so improved facilities will allow us to host more than the 53 we currently can.

We expect to increase our audience capacity by having a more flexible space and better equipment. While we have concentrated on online presentations since the Covid pandemic began, we want to improve our facilities, so that we can increase our in-person events, encouraging new audiences to come to Downtown Albany to attend a show or presentation here. We currently host about 7 events a month, about 5 of which are online only. If we can increase the in-person events (still live-streaming where appropriate) we think we can increase our visitor numbers to over 3,000 a year.

If an award is made, describe how the funds will help you to sustain your operations in Albany County.

The IAHM now has over 11,000 online followers in addition to its five hundred museum members. As the Museum's visibility expands, and with a complete reopening of the new location with fully renovated galleries, now is the time to work towards growth. The IAHM aims to not just return to a pre-pandemic normal, but to build on the successes and learn from the challenges of the last few years to expand beyond what the Museum has previously attempted. Goals of increased in-person programming (as well as a continuation of the popular virtual offerings), a more comprehensive exhibition schedule, and greater community interaction are not possible, however, without updated facilities. Thus, in order to strengthen the Museum's institutional capacity in order to best serve our patrons and community, the IAHM requests funding to renovate and modernize the over thirty year old planetarium into a proper theater. This funding will strengthen our institutional capacity to respond to community needs quickly, effectively, efficiently, and responsibly.

Describe the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic increased or decreased demand for your services. As an option, you may attach to this application any optional information that supports you're the service increase or decrease being described below.

The IAHM was closed for six months in 2020, and though the lifting of restrictions in 2021 enabled visitors to return, the unfortunate timing of pandemic closures with our relocation to our new address, and the subsequent loss of staff and volunteers, has meant that the dreams for the new space have yet to be fully realized. The IAHM is eager to return to in-person programming, both those for which it has been known for years as well as innovative new offerings. And more broadly, the community is eager for more events, things to do, and new activities. The IAHM is ready to signal not merely a full recovery from the pandemic year, but a successful reinvigoration of the Museum and a readiness to serve our community and fulfill our mission. Our online talks have been hugely popular, with over 40,000 views online, but in order to grow, we must return to in-person programming and need updated facilities to do that. While many new visitors to the museum found us online, there is a growing desire among our local members - and wider community - to attend events in person. We have certainly grown our audience since 2020, and now we want to be able to serve more of them in person, while also improving the quality of our online broadcasts.

Please select the grant opportunity you wish to apply to

Arts, Culture, and Tourism (ACT) Promotion Grants (Up to \$100,000)

Project Information – Promotion Grants

Please select whether the proposed project is new or existing

Expands an existing initiative or project

Please provide a short summary of your proposed project including a project name, general description, total cost, reason(s) why you are pursuing the project and anticipated impact:

Renovation of Planetarium Theater.

We moved in to our premises in February 2020, and were closed for 6 months in March because of Covid 19, so that gave us time to paint, make office space, hang many of our exhibitions, and install a replica thatched cottage and tenement apartment. But we did not have the time or resources to renovate the old planetarium, except for removing the big ball projector and trying to straighten the seats, so they were less reclined. We have always held lectures and screened movies or documentaries, so we did (and do) use the Planetarium for those activities still. However, there are several problems with the space as it is currently designed, because it was never meant to suit our purpose. The lighting is not great for live performances or readings, and the technology is very old, so it is very cumbersome when we livestream a talk. We have to set up two laptops, one for the speaker to use which is for the Zoom audience, and then an employee also has to control the slides from a laptop at the back so that the live audience can see the projected slides. If we are holding live performances, the screen is huge and blank, so it looks very unappealing behind the actors or musicians. It also takes up a lot of space on the "stage area" and theater, because it is a thick screen which wraps around the entire room - the planetarium would have projected onto the whole thing. There is also no sound system, so musicians either have to bring their own, or we have to rent equipment like speakers etc.

We need to remove the 360 degree screen and replace it with blank, squared walls, and install a thoroughly modern conferencing system which would allow speakers to present to a hybrid audience (online and in-house) simultaneously. We also need a retractable screen so that we can continue to screen movies and documentaries, as we do monthly.

We need to replace the sound-proofing in the attic as most of that has disintegrated. This is affecting the acoustics in the room, but also is falling onto our archival material which we store in the attic.

The seats are over 30 years, frayed, and at a more reclined slant than is optimal for our needs. We straightened them as much as we could when we moved in first, but they are seats intended for a planetarium, not an auditorium,

so we will need to install all new tiered seating.

The room is currently a circular shape and we will try to square that out if possible - there is a "catwalk" behind the circular wall, so it will just mean aligning with the actual external walls.

The renovations, sound proofing and equipment will cost at least \$100,000 so this grant will allow us to totally transform the last of the space that we inhabit. The building was designed over thirty years ago and we have made do with the Planetarium structure and facilities until now because we have not had a choice! But as our members and community are more confident about attending in-person events, and with the new hotel about to be open ensuring that tourists will be available to attending night time events, a makeover of the space would be a significant investment in our facilities and improve the visitor experience. We will have to continue providing the more academic, livestreamed talks online too though, as our online audience has grown since 2020, and it would not be fair to abandon them. So we need to have better hybrid facilities to properly serve both audiences.

The most significant advantage to renovating the space will be that it will be much live-performer friendly, and so we will absolutely be able to expand our in-person offerings. We already partner with local drama groups to present plays and dramatic readings (two performances are scheduled for September and October) and we have had a local Irish Dance School perform several times too, despite the shortcomings of the place. So, with better stage, light, and sound facilities, as well as better seating, we can offer more varied programs and a better sensory experience to our members and community. We want the Theater to be a place that other groups can use too, and will absolutely offer the space to others. Our monthly movie club and the monthly documentary film club we run, are both very popular with at least 20 people attending each night. If the facilities are better, we can offer more regular screenings, thus providing more choice for both downtown residents and the tourists we hope will come. It will transform our ability as a museum to host events, and fixing the soundproofing will ensure that our archives are not being compromised by the falling material!

What amount of funding is being requested?

\$100,000.00

Please describe the entity's capabilities to implement the project you propose including organizational structure, staff members involved, a summary of similar initiatives you have undertaken and the date they were completed:

We are ready to go with this project! The budget allows for professional installation of the seating, sound-proofing, and technology, but we have three part-time staff, a full-time director, and an active board, as well as many volunteers and interns, who will help to prepare the space, especially the attic and behind the screen area. When we moved in, in February 2020, we had just two weeks to remove all of the older installation. It used to house the Discover Albany self-guided tour, all of which was left in-situ for us to remove and return to the City. We worked night and day for two weeks so that we could open in March for Irish Heritage Month, with the space transformed. Then, during the six months we were closed for Covid 19, we built a to-scale replica of an Irish thatched cottage and a tenement apartment, with just volunteer help, which was completed in under two months. Staff and volunteers also renovated the planetarium by reattaching all of the seats, removing the big ball projector, and recarpeting parts of it, in under two weeks. We painted every inch of the museum (12,000 square feet) with just volunteers and the board helping, and replaced carpet in the main area. We installed a beautiful Famine Memorial Garden in our courtyard last summer in a few days, with volunteers and board members.

Our museum community is excited for this to happen and are willing to donate time and energy to see that it does get done in as quickly a time-frame as possible, so that we can resume activities in there.

Please describe, in detail, the impact your proposed project will have on Arts, Culture and/or Tourism in Albany County. Describe how your project will attract new visitors to Albany County. Where possible use metrics/estimates of impact (i.e. increased visitation etc.).

The Irish American Heritage Museum has been a part of Albany now for over 36 years, although we were originally based in East Durham. We have been in downtown Albany for over 15 years, and every year our reputation and reach grows.

Despite visitor numbers still being slightly reduced since Covid 19 - which is a city-wide issue, not just one that affects us, we have about 4,000 day visitors each year, with another 3,600 attending in-person events, and almost 30,000 watching them online. With an improved lecture and performance space allowing us to host more a more diverse range of activities, I am confident that visitors to our Museum will increase.

We intend to continue our diverse programming in a better equipped space. This past six months alone, we have hosted panel discussions on Brexit and Northern Ireland; interviewed writers with the Writers Institute; screened 12 movies or documentaries and had Q&A with the film makers afterwards; had a drama group do a reading of the Dead; had a one-man play performed by a NYC actor; hosted six different musical performances; had Bethlehem Traditional School of Dance perform; and hosted a one woman Irish dance play. Lighting and sound has not been

optimal for any of these live performances, and the space is quite stark. If we had a more artist-friendly space, and one visually appealing to the audience, I am sure that more people would attend the events.

With the new hotel coming soon, and continuing to partner with our neighbors at the Albany Pump Station and the Olde English Pub on dinner specials for museum/show attendees, I am confident that we will serve over 5,000 visitors annually in-person.

How will you track performance goals and define success? Include at least two key performance indicators and expected annual outcomes/impact during the reporting period (September 2023 - December 2026).

I expect to see both an increased in-person attendance at the theater, and to see more diverse performances/lectures being offered as the facilities will have improved.

We always track attendees at both our events and daily museum visitors, so we will continue to do that. Our CRM system is Keela, and we can sell tickets through that, so we will track whether online tickets sales increase, as well as in-person purchases. We will also tally the number of events we have had and the types, and track the new patterns as they emerge. We advertise our events on all social media platforms, our website, and several local, online calendars.

With improved live-streaming and hybrid capabilities, we might be able to offer the use of the space to other non-profits or similar organizations, so we will monitor those events too.

What is the proposed project start date?

As soon as possible. We are hosting an exhibition from the Great Hunger Museum in September which will be held in the gallery outside the theater, so we can start with the soundproofing in the attic, and then work on the auditorium after December, when the exhibit is finished.

What is the anticipated date of completion?

We expect it will all be completed by Fall of 2024.

Please provide key performance indicator(s) demonstrating anticipated results

Indicator	2024	2025	2026
Increased Audience/Visitors	3,500	4,000	4,500
Increased/Diverse Programming	100 events p/a	110 events p/a	115 events p/a

Please provide key project milestones inclusive of the anticipated timelines and descriptions

Milestone	Anticipated Timeline	Task Description
Soundproofing replaced in attic	Fall 2023	Removal of remnants of sound-proofing; installation of new panels.
Old screen and fixture in auditorium removed	Winter 2023	Remove old panels; re-finish walls.
Install new screen.	Winter 2023/2024	Installation of new drywall and new retractable screen.
New sound, lights, technology	Winter/Spring 2024	Install new hybrid livestream features; in-house sound and lighting installed.
Theater seating	Summer 2024	Install new fixed, tiered seating

At the top of this page is a downloadable project budget. Please download the budget form and upload it here.

- [Albany-Co-IAHM-Proposed-ARPA-Budget.pdf](#)

If you are funding a multi-year initiative, please provide a breakdown of funding level per year below*:

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2023	2024	2025	2026
40,000	60,000		

Is any upfront funding needed to successfully implement your proposed project?

No

Describe how the funding will support a sustainable Arts/Culture/Tourism initiative that will continue to serve Albany County residents after ARPA funds have been exhausted .

The improvements to the facilities of the theater and auditorium, while only taking about a year to install, should have a "shelf-life" of at least twenty years - for instance, the current projector and soundproofing were installed over thirty years ago, and they work, although they are clunky and technically obsolete! Although equipment like the projector and laptops may need to be replaced after about five years, the cost of those will not be prohibitive. Maintenance of lighting etc. will be minimal, and given that there will be an income stream from hosting events at the theater, we are prepared to invest in the facilities to ensure they are maintained and serviced. The investment is heavy up-front, but will be an absolutely valuable addition to our facilities and one which we will use monthly to offer an expanded choice of events and activities to Albany County residents and visitors alike.

Explain why ARPA Funds Are Needed to Complete the proposed program/project. Would the proposal be Possible Without ARPA Assistance? Describe how your proposal would be impacted if you are awarded a smaller grant than requested?

It has long been our dream to renovate the old planetarium, and we have done as much as we can with our limited means. I am delighted to say we fully utilize it each month and have done so for the three years we have been in the building, but it is not a modern theater, and is not optimal for either performers or the audience. Receiving the ARPA funding from Albany county, would make our pipe dream a reality, would be a long-term investment in the building facilities, and would absolutely improve the visitor experience. This funding will allow a complete and quick renovation of the space, instead of what would otherwise be a piecemeal effort on our part.

If the award amount is smaller than requested, we would have to either complete the more urgent needs of the job, and postpone parts like the seating, until such time as we could raise sufficient funds to complete the project.

We currently use and love the space - it is most definitely an asset and a hidden gem - but we have jerry-rigged its limited capabilities to make it something it is not! While that has been satisfactory for three years, the opportunity to install a proper, modern, energy-efficient, and workable theater in that auditorium is too good to miss. We fervently hope that we are successful in our request, so that we can completely transform the space in one massive effort, to make it a more user-friendly theater for both performers and audience members.

Tax Information

Please upload Federal tax returns for 2019

- [2019-990-IAHM.pdf](#)

Please upload Federal tax returns for 2020

- [2020-990-IAHM.pdf](#)

Please upload Federal tax returns for 2021

- [2021-IAHM-Complete-990.pdf](#)

If available, please provide your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov

ESEUN5T1M4K1

Risk Assessment

Has the entity adopted and/or implemented policies relating to: records retention, conflict of interest, code of ethics, and/or nondiscrimination policies?

Yes

If "Yes" above, please specify which policies have been adopted

The Board signs a conflict of interest statement every year. We have non-discrimination, code of ethics, and records retention policies.

Is the entity properly insured?

Yes

If "Yes" above, please specify which types of insurance(s) are held and the limit(s).

General General Liability \$1,000,000 Umbrella Liability; \$1,000,000; Workers Compensation and Board, \$500,000 per person

Does the entity have a financial management system?

Yes

If "Yes" above, please provide details about the financial management system.

We have online Quikbooks which is synced with our banking. The finance committee checks and reconciles the accounts each month, and our CPA, Knapek, Gabriele & Bottini review the accounts each year and file the 990.

Has there been any change in the entity's key staffing positions in the last 2 years?

No

Has the entity previously done work for the Federal government (i.e. Is the entity experienced in managing Federal funds)?

No

The County is careful about identifying and avoiding conflicts of interest, especially with grants awarded through the County. A conflict of interest arises when a person's self-interest and professional interest or public interest intersect. In this situation, there is the potential for biased professional judgment and lack of objectivity which creates a serious conflict when one of the interests can benefit financially or personally from actions or decisions made in the official capacity. A conflict of interest exists whether or not decisions are affected by a personal interest; there only needs to be the possibility of bias for a conflict. If your organization knows of a possible conflict of interest with your application for funds please disclose that information here. Otherwise write "None."

None.

Certifications

US Treasury Reporting & Compliance Acknowledgment 1

- I Have Been Provided a Copy and Understand the U.S. Treasury's Compliance and Reporting Guidance for State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (see link or PDF included at the top of page)

US Treasury Reporting & Compliance Acknowledgment 2

- Should the County Allocate ARPA Funds, I am Able to and Pledge to Adhere to ALL Compliance and Reporting Requirements of the U.S. Treasury as it relates to any State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

US Treasury Reporting & Compliance Acknowledgment 3

- I Understand the County Will Contact me if/when Additional Information is Needed and that Information will be Promptly Provided to the County to Support Reporting Requirements

US Treasury Reporting & Compliance Acknowledgment 4

- If for Any Reason I am Unable to Comply with the U.S. Treasury's Compliance and Reporting Requirements I will Immediately Notify the County in writing by email or letter

US Treasury Reporting & Compliance Acknowledgment 5

- All Information Submitted in this Application is True & Accurate

Electronic Signature Agreement

- I Agree

Type name

Elizabeth Stack