

# National Museum Survey (NMS) Data Collection

## Supporting Statement for PRA Submission

### Part A: Justification

#### A.1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

##### A.1.a. Purpose of the Submission

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) requests clearance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for the collection of the National Museum Survey (NMS) in 2025.

IMLS successfully conducted a pilot of the NMS in 2023.<sup>1,2</sup> This request seeks clearance to administer the NMS to the full museum field with small improvements to the questionnaire and methodology as informed by findings from the pilot study along with additional cognitive interviewing completed in 2024.

The NMS (Attachment A) will be a voluntary collection that seeks to measure and understand the scope, scale and nature of the role that the nation's diverse museums play in American society. IMLS will use the data collected through the NMS to provide policymakers, museum practitioners, researchers, and the public with essential baseline statistics regarding the museum sector.

##### Necessity of the Information Collection

The United States is home to tens of thousands of museums. Together they steward living and non-living collections and, through their programs and services, contribute to the cultural health, economic vitality, and social well-being of the communities they serve.

Despite their importance, however, there has never been a statistically valid, freely available annual collection focused on the museum sector. In particular, there has never been a singular collection that captures the diverse composition of the museum field in terms of its varied disciplines and institution sizes. The field has long requested such a collection because its absence has hindered museum researchers' and administrators' ability to communicate the field's important contributions to American society and has also hindered policymakers' effectiveness in tailoring outreach to, and support for, the sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Approved and completed under the IMLS Generic Clearance to Conduct Pre-Testing of Surveys, 3137-0125.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the results of this pilot study, refer to the *IMLS NMS Pilot: A summary report*.  
<https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/nms-pilot-summary-report.pdf>

### **A.1.b. Legislative Authorization**

20 U.S. Code § 9108 provides IMLS with legislative authority to conduct policy research, analysis, and data collection to extend and improve the nation's museum, library, and information services. IMLS' current efforts to conduct a survey of the nation's museums began in 2020 and included extensive groundwork (see also Section A.4 below) leading to a pilot of the NMS in 2023. The full NMS is a data collection that will fulfill this aspect of IMLS' governmental role by capturing the scope and scale of museums' presence and reach within the United States over time by gathering foundational, high-level data directly from museums to produce valid and reliable results.

### **A.2. Purposes and Uses of the Data**

The primary purpose of NMS is to collect statistically valid data on the American museum sector that does not currently exist. The data will for the first time describe the scope, scale and nature of museums' presence and reach within the United States.

NMS data will serve a foundational purpose in the museum field by providing a common statistical resource from which interested parties can complete analyses used for policymaking, planning, research, and evaluation. Survey results will be used by museum practitioners, policymakers at all levels of government, the public, researchers, and journalists.

### **A.3. Use of Improved Information Technology**

The NMS will be a web-based data collection. Web instruments simplify certain aspects of survey response, such as lowering burden by automatically skipping questions that do not apply based on previous answers, performing arithmetical operations, and allowing for dynamic text substitution that improves respondent experience. The survey contractor will be able to continuously monitor response status and respondent data. During the NMS pilot, which was deployed in nearly identical fashion to the full NMS, most respondents found it easy to navigate through the online survey and only a small percentage experienced any functionality issues.<sup>3</sup>

### **A.4. Efforts to Identify Duplication**

IMLS has completed years of extensive groundwork to develop the NMS. The agency completed literature reviews both as a part of developing the pilot NMS, and as a part of its current survey development efforts. Further, the NMS empaneled a group of subject matter experts (SMEs),

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<sup>3</sup> As noted in the *National Museum Survey Pilot Study: IMLS Internal Report*, pilot respondents were asked to rate the ease of navigating the pilot survey and 89% of NMS pilot respondents rated it easy or very easy to navigate. Further, only 15% experienced any functionality issues when completing the survey. This report is available upon request.

including museum administrators, practitioners, and researchers, in 2021. These SMEs informed pilot development by providing IMLS with grounded guidance and feedback regarding the museum field's needs, existing research efforts, and the NMS pilot's survey design and administration.

The reviews of existing data and consultations with SMEs revealed that while there is some coverage of the topics covered by NMS, data are not freely available to the public, methods employed do not ensure that all museums in the nation are represented, existing collections generally lack sufficient sample size to support comparisons by discipline, and no single collection covers the breadth of disciplines covered by the NMS. As such, no other data collection of this type is available, and the data collected by the NMS do not duplicate any other available information or data collection.

#### **A.5. Method Used to Minimize Burden on Small Businesses**

This survey is for public/nonprofit museums and not for any private sector businesses. This survey will request voluntary data from small museums and was carefully developed with the survey respondent in mind.

IMLS completed extensive background research with museums while developing the NMS. Based on vital learnings and best practices from this research, the NMS was intentionally designed to reduce respondent burden and be easy to complete. During respondent research in developing the pilot survey, IMLS paid particular attention to small museums to ensure any challenges they faced in responding to the survey were addressed. As a result, smaller museums that took the pilot survey tended to need less time to complete than larger museums. The majority of all museums needed 1 hour or less to complete the pilot survey.<sup>4</sup> The full NMS will include 17 fewer questions than the pilot.

The survey will be offered over the web, which reduces survey burden by allowing skip logic that reduces the number of questions that don't apply based on previous responses, and by allowing respondents to skip any questions that they do not want, or are unable, to answer.

#### **A.6. Frequency of Data Collection**

Conducting the NMS annually will allow for up-to-date statistically valid information on the U.S. museum sector on their facilities, finances, admissions and visitation, and digital presence.

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<sup>4</sup> As noted in the *National Museum Survey Pilot Study: IMLS Internal Report*, pilot respondents were asked to report the amount of time it took to complete the pilot survey and 60% of NMS pilot respondents said it took 1 hour or less, with 29% reporting it took 30 minutes or less. This report is available upon request.

Annual data are more current and thus more valuable for planning and analysis than data collected on a less frequent schedule and allow for longitudinal trend analyses.

Policymakers at the Federal, State, and local levels, museum practitioners, researchers, and others will use the data to assess the museum sector. Up-to-date national data and summaries of standardized data by discipline and region would not be available if IMLS did not conduct this survey annually. Also, conducting this survey annually will allow IMLS to further refine a comprehensive list of the nation's museums, allowing for annual additions and removing any museums that have closed.

## **A.7. Special Circumstances of Data Collection**

No special circumstances require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines in 5 C.F.R. § 1320.5.

## **A.8. Consultation and Feedback from Outside the Agency**

### **A.8.1. Public Comments Solicited through the *Federal Register***

IMLS published a Notice in the *Federal Register* on April 30, 2024, [[89 FR 34277](#) (Document Number 2024-09276)], with a 60-day public comment period to announce the forwarding of the information collection request to OMB for approval. In response to the Notice, the agency received one comment from a representative of the American Library Association who wanted to ensure that museums located within libraries were included in, and eligible for, the NMS. The representative subsequently provided a list of such institutions for IMLS to cross-reference against the agency's list of museums to which the NMS will be administered. IMLS published a Notice in the *Federal Register* on September 30, 2024, [[89FR79649](#) (Document Number 2024-22257)], with a 30-day public comment to OMB.

### **A.8.2. Consultants Outside the Agency**

IMLS consulted with a panel of external SMEs from museums, museum associations, and non-museum entities such as research centers, nonprofits, and federal agencies to develop the NMS pilot, and has empaneled a new group of SMEs to advise IMLS' development of the full NMS. These panels represent a strong mix of expertise and experience from the field and have informed all aspects of NMS development, from the NMS vision statement through the fielding.

IMLS has also completed extensive voluntary quantitative and qualitative respondent research with hundreds of museum administrators through a quantitative survey, focus groups, and cognitive interviews in preparation for launching the NMS.

## **A.9. Provision of Payments or Gifts to Respondents**

Respondents to the NMS will not be offered nor receive pay or gifts for their participation in the NMS.

### **A.10. Assurance of Confidentiality**

The data collected through the NMS directly relate to establishments (museums), and not individuals, thereby reducing the risk of collecting personally identifiable information. The contact information collected through the NMS only relates to museum administrators' roles in completing the survey.

Survey responses will be collected on a password-protected site that is certified to meet the federal government's data security requirements. All collected data will be maintained on servers that meet federal data security requirements and disposed of in keeping with federal data retention requirements.

Individual responses collected through this survey will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. Data will only be reported in ways that avoid the mosaic effect in order to ensure respondent confidentiality. Respondents are assured that only members of the research team have access to individual survey responses and that their participation has no impact on their current or future relationship with IMLS.

### **A.11. Sensitive Questions**

The NMS does not collect any information that is traditionally considered to be sensitive because it is a survey of establishments and not individuals. The survey was designed with extensive input from the museum field and intentionally avoids collecting data that museum administrators identified as potentially controversial.

The NMS does collect data around foot traffic and operating budget and expenses, and while these data are often public for the nonprofit, government and academic institutions at the core of the NMS effort they may still be potentially sensitive for certain museums. The collection and dissemination of data will be conducted in accordance with applicable law, however, with particular attention paid to how potentially sensitive information is disseminated (see also Section A.10 above).

### **A.12. Estimated Response Burden**

IMLS will conduct a full census of U.S. museums for the NMS, which entails soliciting response from approximately 21,500 museums.

The response rate for the NMS pilot survey was 16.5%. IMLS is investing significant efforts into improving the NMS population frame for the full survey in order to add missing contact information, improve existing contact information, ensure that duplicate entries have been removed, and to try and add any missing entries that IMLS is able to uncover. These efforts will ensure that the survey will reach the best person to complete the survey for the museum and awareness of the upcoming survey, which should lead to better response. The agency is also actively engaging with museum associations to spread awareness about the survey and encourage participation.

Based on the agency's outreach to the field, groundwork research in preparation for the survey, revisions to the questionnaire, methodology, and population frame, and review of response rates from other efforts to survey the field, including those from its own pre-pilot respondent research, the anticipated response rate for the full NMS in 2025 is 35%, which would lead to an anticipated annual response from 7,500 museums.

The amount of time needed to complete the survey may vary by institution type and size, as well as how readily accessible the requested data are for each institution. Most pilot respondents reported that the burden hours required to complete the survey, including all time required to collect the needed information, as 1 hour or less.<sup>5</sup> The full NMS will include 17 fewer questions than the pilot, and as such the burden level should be reduced from those pilot estimates. IMLS has also optimized the NMS questionnaire and methodology based on findings from its pilot administration.

Based on the pilot survey and these survey refinements, IMLS conservatively estimates that on average across all institutions the survey will require 1 hour to complete, including the time needed to consult records to inform responses.

The estimated total annual hour burden is therefore 7,500 hours (1-hour times 7,500 respondents).

The opportunity cost to respondents could be computed using an average hourly wage. Based on the May 2023 statistic, \$57.57 represents a simple average of hourly mean wage figures for government, academic, and company/enterprise managers (<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes113012.htm>). \$431,718.75 (7,500 hrs × \$57.56/hr).

### **A.13. Estimates of Cost**

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<sup>5</sup> See footnote 4 in Section A.5.

Respondents are not expected to incur any capital and start-up costs, or systems maintenance costs in responding.

#### **A.14. Annualized Cost to the Federal Government**

The total annual estimated cost to the federal government for administering the NMS is \$323,533.21, which includes \$125,691.00 in federal Human Resources costs and \$197,842.21 in contracting costs.

#### **A.15. Reasons for Changes in Response Burden and Costs**

The estimated burden rate for the NMS pilot was 90 minutes, including the time spent referring to records to complete the survey. The pilot included a question that asked the respondent the total amount of time it took their institution to complete the survey. As noted in Section A.12 above, an analysis of the data revealed that the survey took more than half of the respondents 1 hour or less to complete it with over half of those respondents saying it took 30 minutes or less. There are 17 fewer questions on the full NMS than the pilot and IMLS has optimized the NMS questionnaire and methodology based on findings from its pilot administration and input from SMEs.

There are no additional costs to the respondents.

#### **A.16. Publication Plans and Time Schedule**

IMLS plans to tabulate and publish the results in aggregate form. The NMS data products include (1) a report of findings that contains an introduction, findings, and tables; and (2) a publicly available data portal that the public can access aggregate results for overall and filtered segments of results. However, suppression rules will be applied on the data portal to prevent users from drilling down too far into the results and risking identification of any museum's individual data. The data portal will be published for the public on the IMLS website.

The NMS will follow this proposed schedule for the collection of 2025 data:

| <b>Activity</b>   | <b>Date*</b>     |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Survey prelaunch  | January 9, 2025  |
| Survey launch     | January 27, 2025 |
| Survey close date | March 9, 2025    |
| Results released  | June 2025        |

\* Dates are tentative and based on OMB approval.

**A.17. Approval for Not Displaying the Expiration Date for OMB Approval**

No exemption from the requirements to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection is requested for the NMS data collection. The OMB approval number and expiration date will be displayed on all survey instruments.

**A.18. Exceptions to the Certification Statement**

No exceptions to the certification statement apply to the NMS.