



MetLife Foundation



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**AAM's Center for the Future of Museums, EmcArts and MetLife
Foundation Announce Round 2 RFP for
Innovation Lab for Museums**

**Proposals Sought for Unique Program Designed to Foster Innovative Approaches to
Challenges Facing America's Museums**

RFP Released, Proposals will be accepted through May 14, 2012

WASHINGTON, D.C. March 28, 2012 — The American Association of Museums' (AAM) Center for the Future of Museums (CFM), EmcArts and MetLife Foundation announce the second round of a new initiative created 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.EmcArts.org and <http://futureofmuseums.org/events/innovationlab.cfm>. The deadline for round 2 proposals is May 14, 2012.

The inaugural round of the Innovation Lab began its work in January of this year with three museums: The Levine Museum of the New South (Charlotte, NC), the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Kansas City, MO) and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco, CA).

This round of the Innovation Lab for Museums is again generously funded by a \$550,000 grant from MetLife Foundation, a long-time supporter of the nation's museum community. The Foundation has to date committed over \$1 million to the field via the Innovation Lab.

The Innovation Lab for Museums is 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 cultural sector. In this second 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 inclusive representation 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 adaptive 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 museum and to the field, and the capacity of the applicant to share what they learn through participating in the Lab.

"We have already learned a tremendous amount from the Lab, " said Elizabeth Merritt, director of the Center for the Future of Museums. "The applications from round 1 painted a valuable picture of the challenges facing museums and the barriers they face in going about their business in truly new ways. All museums engaged in the Innovation Lab for Museums are breaking trail for the field. We look forward to sharing what they learn from their explorations of the future."

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 each participating museum \$40,000 in innovation capital to support the prototyping and evaluation of innovative strategies over 6 months, before a full launch is considered.

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

The program builds on EmcArts' tested framework for fostering organizational innovation in nonprofit cultural institutions. 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 launch of the Innovation Lab for Museums is attracting a lot of attention and round 1 resulted in many strong applications from museums throughout the country. The program has clearly touched a nerve, as museums seek the space, resources and facilitation to design and test 'next practices' for this new era," notes Richard Evans, President of EmcArts. "The cumulative experience of Lab participants will help museums break down internal barriers to innovation, reshaping organizational cultures so that they are better aligned with ongoing 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 pleased to continue and deepen our partnership 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 adaptive change. 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. Visit www.ArtsFwd.org where arts leaders share stories and learning from innovation work. 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.