

1. Provide a brief description of the organization (i.e., years of operation, services provided, etc.)

Established in 1966, and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, Besser Museum provides culturally enriching educational experiences in art, history, and science to over 20,000 visitors annually, living in or visiting Northeast Michigan. Besser Museum's two-story, 31,000-square-foot facility sits on an eight-acre campus. Museum visitors experience a state-of-the-art digital planetarium, Foucault pendulum, Devonian fossil digging park, fine art galleries, an authentic historic village with five original buildings, two maritime vessels showcased in what is being developed into the Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Exhibit, exhibits on early industries in Northeast Michigan, thousands of Native American artifacts in the Anishinaabe exhibit (plans to revitalize with supervision from Tribal consultants is underway) and a wildlife exhibit, which includes both native and invasive mounted fish species. The Museum serves the counties of Alpena, Alcona, Iosco, Montmorency, Presque Isle, Cheboygan, Otsego, and Oscoda.

2. Provide a brief project overview. (Name, goals, and project time frame)

The Besser Museum is preparing to renovate 3000 square feet of gallery space to build the new *Discover Northeast Michigan History (DNM History)* exhibit at a cost of approximately one-million dollars. This project will transform the current gallery space, unchanged since the 1970s, into a multi-themed exhibit providing accurate historical interpretation in an immersive media presentation relevant to contemporary audiences of all ages. The Besser Museum will hire experienced professional exhibit designers and fabricators to work through the phases of research, design, fabrication, and installation, which is expected to take three years to complete.

Besser Museum's vision is an exhibit that explores the dynamic story of Northeast Michigan's interconnected natural resources and cultural heritage through the ability to navigate the past, illuminate the present, and imagine the future. Besser Museum's mission is to inspire curiosity, foster community pride, and cultivate personal legacy. Maximizing the gallery space with the multi-themed *DNM History* exhibit will achieve these goals. This project will result in a new, stimulating, family friendly, interactive, 21st century exhibit chronicling eleven time periods in Northeast Michigan's history. Each historical period in the new exhibit will celebrate the community's unique heritage and help visitors gain a broad understanding of the region. The exhibit will promote further discovery of the region by encouraging visits to nearby relevant locations.

The stages within the new *Discover Northeast Michigan History* exhibit follow:

- (1). The Formation of the Universe: Our place within the Milky Way Galaxy.** The exhibit will introduce basic astronomy information providing an understanding of our place in time and space. Visitors will be encouraged to visit the Besser Museum planetarium to learn more about the universe.
- (2). The Formation of Earth: Third Rock from the Sun.** The exhibit will include the forces that shaped the planet, the geological timeline, the fossil record of the region, geological features unique to the area, such as the sinkholes, and the planet's natural resources used for industry, along with the museum's collection of minerals.
- (3). The Ice Ages: Formation of the Great Lakes.** The exhibit will feature the five different Ice Ages, the formation of the Great Lakes, the different lake levels over time, the aquatic species both native and invasive and how they inhabited the lakes. The exhibit will touch on water transportation and shipwrecks, encouraging visitors to visit Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary.
- (4). The Thunder Bay River.** The flora and fauna of the Thunder Bay River played a significant role in the early history of indigenous peoples. The Thunder Bay River is the boundary of two major treaties. Once teaming with sturgeon and other species of fish, the Thunder Bay River was forever changed by the Timber Boom and installation of dams. Before dams, the Thunder Bay rivaled the white-water rapids of the west.

(5) The First Peoples: Northeast Michigan Native American Tribes. The Besser Museum has been working with tribal consultants for the past several years to revitalize the narrative of the Museum's Native American exhibit. This section of the exhibit will focus on indigenous peoples, past and present. The exhibit will also feature stories of Northeast Michigan Native American families, such as Edith Bondie, whose family lived in the Hubbard Lake area for centuries.

(6) French Fur Traders - European Contact (1600s) This section in the exhibit timeline will include historical objects and information about the French fur traders. The section will answer questions about when, why, and where traders set up camps and trapped for furs.

(7) The Declaration of Independence, Michigan Statehood, Indian Treaties: 1700 to 1800s. This section will span over one-hundred-years of American's history to give Museum visitors an understanding of how the western expansion and the Timber Boom eventually impacted the Thunder Bay region.

(8) The Timber Boom. This section will expand upon the Museum's current exhibit. The new exhibit will include more information on once thriving timber communities, information about tree species, where the timber went, and what it was used for.

(9) A Growing Community. This section will highlight businesses and institutions that sprung up during the lumbering and fishing industries eras helping to sustain and grow the livelihoods of citizens within the growing communities of the area. Visitors will be directed to visit the Museum's existing Avenue of Shops, Historic Village, and Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Exhibit. Visitors will also be encouraged to do the walking tour of Alpena's historic buildings.

(10) Farming Families. This section will focus on the early families who established farms throughout the region; what crops they grew, which succeeded, and which failed, such as tobacco. The Museum will incorporate its historic collection of farming tools and historic photos for interpretation.

(11) The Industrial Revolution. This section will cover the 20th century up to the present. It will feature the history of the cement plant, Fletcher Paper Co., Alpena Motor Company, Besser Co., DPI, Panel Processing, Thunder Bay Manufacturing, W.G. Benjy Manufacturing, Omni, and others. The exhibit will also highlight the community's amenities such as Alpena Community College, My-Michigan hospital/cancer center, along with other local businesses and attractions the community proudly promotes.

3. Specifically, for what purpose will the grant dollars be used? How critical is a FFNM Legacy grant to the success of your project?

The \$100,000 FFNM Legacy grant is critical to the success of the new *DNM History* exhibit. FFNM funds will help cover costs associated with the professionally fabricated and installed state-of-the-art exhibit components necessary to achieve an immersive, stimulating educational experience for Museum visitors of all ages.

4. What is the target population for this project and how many people will benefit? If applicable, explain how your project involves volunteers.

Because the Besser Museum serves a broad range of ages, interests, and abilities, *DNM History* exhibit will be designed with multiple levels of engagement. Museum visitors will be immersed in events spanning through space and time connecting the past, present and future. Each themed area will also direct visitors to other exhibits within the Museum that connect to the theme, and to locations throughout Northeast Michigan. Besser Museum visitation is 20,000-plus annually, including over 2,000 student visits per year. We are confident, with the installation of this new exhibit, the Besser Museum will eventually attract visitors in numbers equal to the 100,000 visitors the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary enjoys annually.

5. If applicable, explain how your project involves volunteers.

Besser Museum will invite historical, cultural, and educational agencies to participate in this amazing opportunity to build a new state-of-the-art museum exhibit. The Museum will seek to engage content experts from Alpena Community College, Alpena Public Schools, George N. Fletcher Library, AMA-ESD Great Start Collaborative, along with City, County and Township officials. The Museum will also reach out to local citizens who can contribute content to this unique representation of our community. These collaborations will prove beneficial for everyone as the completed exhibit will showcase the best of Northeast Michigan.

6. Will the grant act as “seed money”? Is there a plan for permanent funding after the grant is used?

The FFNM Legacy grant will be used to support the construction of this exciting new museum exhibit experience at the Besser Museum. After completion, the new exhibit will be maintained with funds from a recently received endowed gift, administered by the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan. These endowed funds, distributed annually, will permanently fund the upkeep of the new exhibit.

7. How does the project help a segment of the citizenry who are not being served adequately?

There is much research highlighting the benefits of the learning environments museums provide. Visiting museums make people smarter, happier, inspired, connected to their community, shape their attitudes about the world, and provide different perspectives. Many citizens, especially the student population, living in Northeast Michigan, do not have the means or opportunity to travel to cities with museums housing modern, stimulating, interactive exhibits. Many citizens also have a limited knowledge of their own local history. This project will provide area citizens an opportunity to enjoy experiences they may never enjoy otherwise.

8. How will your project be funded? List other sources of funds and specify any other organizations working with you on this project.

The funding plan for this million-dollar capital project will include utilizing a portion of the Museum’s endowed funds. The Museum will also seek grant funding from several other sources: Michigan Council of Arts and Cultural Affairs, Alpena County Youth and Recreational Grant, Besser Foundation, and Community Foundation grants. The Museum also has private donor support for this project. Besser Museum will receive in-kind donations of content knowledge for exhibit development from several partnering organizations including the Genealogical Society of Northeast Michigan, ACC, Alpena Public Schools, George N. Fletcher Library, NOAA/TBNMS, Thunder Bay River Center, Alpena 4H, AMA-ESD Great Start Collaborative.

9. Describe your evaluation plan and specify success measures.

The evaluators will be the stakeholders: Besser Museum Board of Trustees, Executive Director, partnering organizations, volunteers, members of the community, children in schools, and tourists to the area. Formative evaluation throughout the process will be conducted to ensure each step is meeting the goals and objectives for the exhibit to present accurate information about Northeast Michigan in a medium presentation that will educate all ages, inspire curiosity, and foster community pride. Besser Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and will adhere to their standards of exhibit planning and evaluation. Once fully funded and executed, the Museum will monitor the contractors work plan and make written reports to the Museum's Board and funders. After the exhibit is completed, quantitative metrics will be used to measure the success of the exhibit. This includes attendance numbers, the quality of the experience as measured by quick formal written surveys by visitors and a structured post interview of teachers who bring their students to the museum.

Besser Museum *Discover Northeast Michigan History* Project Budget Narrative

According to industry standards, museum exhibit construction averages \$300 per square foot. The Besser Museum is budgeting \$1,000,000 to have a professional museum exhibit design company renovate 3000 square of gallery space for the new *Discover Northeast Michigan History* exhibit. The budget will cover all expenses associated with completing an exhibit ready for public viewing.

The entire budget will cover conceptual planning, interpretive programming, schematic design, design development, final design, fabrication documents, fabrication/construction (electrical, lighting, flooring, walls, props, signage, and all other related components of the exhibit), and final installation of all exhibit components.

The Besser Museum recently received an endowed gift from Robert and Jacqueline Granum which is administered by the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan. This fund will yield approximately \$50,000 annually and is to be used for establishing and improving permanent indoor exhibits which are held within the main museum building depicting local history. The Besser Museum has also received \$50,000 from a private donor to assist with building the new history exhibit. These gifts will leverage the support needed to create a new and exciting exhibit that will inspire curiosity, foster community pride, and cultivate a personal legacy. These funds total \$100,000.

The Besser Museum is seeking \$130,000 in grant funding from state and local agencies, \$300,000 from foundations, and an additional \$100,000 from private donors, total \$530,000

The remaining \$370,000 will be financed through a local lending institution for a ten-year period using the endowed Granum Fund as collateral.

The *Discover Northeast Michigan History* exhibit will be a tremendous addition to our community serving as a destination for locals and visitors for years to come. The Granum gift's annual distribution will ensure the investment of all the donors in this project will have a positive impact on future generations.