

Explanation of Funding Request

Digital funds will help our staff begin to create inspiring, inclusive, and relevant digital opportunities for engagement for existing and potential audiences of the State Historical Society of North Dakota. Our goal is to remain relevant and inspire a younger generation of museum-goers by showcasing our state's amazing history in new digital formats. Our goal is also to remain as a major tourist attraction as other facilities such as the Theodore Roosevelt Library and Gateway to Science's new building, to name a few, open during the next biennium with appealing new audience engagement technologies.

This digital interactive strategy involves

- Adding one full-time permanent position of a Digital Specialist to create and oversee new digital technologies at our sites across the state.
- \$300,000 in one-time funding would help our staff replace failing technologies at several sites, purchase new software and equipment, and begin creating new digital technologies at the State Museum, Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, Chateau de Mores State Historic Site, and Pembina Museum.
- Creating a digital "history trail" pilot project in Bismarck, highlighting a digital tour of Capitol Grounds artwork and geography that leads through downtown historically significant buildings and ends at Camp Hancock State Historic Site. This can be replicated in all communities connected to state historic sites in the future.
- \$125,000 for consultant fees and services to help research, plan, and design these technologies.

Statistical Data

- About 75% of the existing digital technology at the State Museum is failing, from large format video screens to kiosks to projectors and more. All of the original digital technology in the State Museum was purchased before 2014 and is no longer supported by the vendors. Some digital pieces no longer meet user expectations. Digital offerings are currently being cobbled together for parts and technology replacement without a designated budget. Some public education interactives housed in these technology pieces are outdated, and our staff does not have access to the software to make upgrades.
- The agency's 2022 total in-person was 500,000 and digital visitation was 1,185,878.
- We currently have a strong digital following that is closely tracked. It is our high priority to continue to engage and grow this audience. Our staff manages and/or develops content for eight agency websites, 20 social media outlets, two e-newsletters, a blog, and QR codes for exhibits and marketing strategies.
- Each year our digital engagement grows on all platforms. We have more than tripled our website users from 304,000 in 2017 to 1,131,834 users in 2022.
- Our staff added a new digital high school curriculum to our North Dakota Studies offerings in fall 2022. This is free and available to youth and lifelong learners across the globe. We are monitoring use.
- North Dakota Studies school curricula websites experience about 1.5 million annual pageviews.

Performance Measures

- Our staff will use a variety of metrics to summarize and track performance against objectives while driving results. Data from Google analytics, QR codes, thermal heat trackers in museum galleries, click rates, icon touches and more will help us translate digital usage into accurate and actionable insights for the entire agency. Performance measures will help our staff more accurately monitor visitor satisfaction, enable growth in data-based areas, and drive operational effectiveness on our road to digital transformation.
- We will also monitor visitor attendance at venues where new digital technologies are employed, as increased visitors leads to increased commerce in main street communities of our state historic sites and museums.
- The digital media specialist, with additional staff, will formulate a strategic plan of action.



Transforming Education Through Engaging Exhibits at State Historic Sites

Explanation of Funding Request

To continue to showcase the best of North Dakota's history through the agency's exhibitions areas and continue attracting tourists, we request funding to hire exhibit consultants, create new exhibitions and repair those that are failing after many years and use by hundreds of thousands of visitors.

This Initiative Involves

1. \$200,000 to update interpretation, architectural design, casework, and artifacts of the Inspiration Gallery: Yesterday & Today in the State Museum in Bismarck. This gallery, open since 2014, needs additions of newer stories of inspiring people, places, and activities showcasing the state's impact on local citizens and the world.
2. \$90,000 to update Pembina State Museum exhibits and the observation tower with fresh, inclusive interpretive stories of the fur trade era involving partnerships with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Canadian tribal nations, and Minnesota tribal nations. These updates also include adding a permanent geological time exhibit with fossil casts of creatures from the area.
3. \$80,000 for consultant fees including assistance with research, interpretive design, and writing of new text for updated exhibits.
4. \$150,000 to repair or replace failing audience attractions and technology of major interest: Agricultural tractor cab and flight simulator at the State Museum, informational kiosks, theater components, and monitors.
5. \$120,000 for Washburn's Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center updates to exhibitions, new exhibit equipment, materials, and interpretive panels, and creation of a "Guns of the Expedition" exhibit.
6. \$15,000 to create, design, print, and mount Welk Homestead State Historic Site exterior interpretive panels for visitors to learn about the buildings.
7. \$15,000 for exhibit for Chateau de Mores State Historic Site after the Theodore Roosevelt Library temporary exhibit is removed in 2026.

Performance Measures

We will monitor results by creating a plan, deadlines, and completing the above projects during the upcoming biennium.