

JAPANESE AMERICAN CONFINEMENT SITES GRANT PROGRAM

PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION COMMENTS (November 30, 2009—December 4, 2009)

Narrative Summary

In Fiscal Year 2009, the first year of the grant program, the National Park Service (NPS) awarded 19 grants totaling \$970,000 in a competitive process to eligible non-profit organizations, educational institutions and state and local governments working to preserve and interpret the historic confinement sites where more than 120,000 Japanese Americans were confined during World War II. Grants funded ranged from \$5,000 for a commemorative plaque and ceremony at the Arboga Assembly Center in Marysville, California, to \$292,253 for the new Heart Mountain Interpretive Learning Center in Park County, Wyoming.

In the fall of 2009, the NPS asked the public to provide feedback to help evaluate the first year of the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program. The NPS conducted seven listening sessions from November 30, 2009, through December 4, 2009, to gather public input on how to best improve the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2010. Meetings were held in Denver, Chicago, Seattle, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Honolulu and San Francisco, and included participation from former internees and their families, the Japanese American community, the interested public and various entities including the following:

Amache Historical Society; Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community; Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project; Friends of Amache; Friends of Manzanar, German American Internee Coalition; Go For Broke/Hanashi Oral History Program; Hawaii Community Services Council; Heart Mountain, Wyoming Foundation; Historical Museum at Fort Missoula; Japanese American Citizens League; Japanese American Citizens League—Chicago Chapter; Japanese American Citizens League—Pacific Southwest District; Japanese American Citizens League—Watsonville-Santa Cruz; Japanese American National Museum; Japanese American Service Committee; Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii; Main Street Dumas, Arkansas; Manzanar Committee; Marysville Japanese American Citizens League; Minatoishi Architects; Minidoka Pilgrimage Committee; National Parks Conservation Association; National Trust for Historic Preservation; Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress; Nisei Post; Nisei Veterans; Seattle Nisei Veterans Committee; Topaz Museum; University of Denver; and the Wing Luke Asian Museum, among others.

Several themes emerged from the listening sessions, including the following:

- Improve/streamline application process (move to paperless).
- Strive for geographical balance in grants.
- Share information about grants after their completion.
- Describe and share information about process used to select grant evaluators.
- Allow organizations to receive more than one grant per fiscal year grant cycle.

- Follow-up and report on projects, and share that information with the public; there is no way to measure success without having more information on what the projects are accomplishing.
- Over time, ensure that the projects are balanced geographically and that the story at a national level is being told. This includes taking a strategic approach to make sure no parts of the story are under-represented.
- NPS has been successful in administering the program.
- Provide promotion and press on project results.

In response to these comments, the NPS will make the following changes:

- The NPS will reduce the number of paper copies that each applicant is required to submit from eight complete application packages (one original and seven copies) to one complete application package. At this time, the NPS does not have a system to receive electronic copies of grant proposals.
- The review panel will be asked to consider geographic diversity in the overall selection of grant proposals recommended for funding.
- The NPS will provide an annual report on the projects funded during each grant cycle.
- The NPS will share the process it uses to select members of the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program review panel with the public. Although the NPS cannot reveal the identities of the review panel members, the NPS will provide information regarding the expertise and general background of the review panel.
- Organizations will be allowed to receive more than one grant per fiscal year grant cycle, if selected for funding.
- The NPS will provide summaries of grants awarded each fiscal year that will include greater detail about each project and what it intends to accomplish.
- The NPS will research opportunities for analyzing the program in greater depth to assess if the program is indeed meeting grant program goals and objectives.
- The NPS will document and share the names of groups that participate in the public meetings.
- The NPS will work with grant recipients to prepare press releases that highlight funded projects.

All of the comments that the NPS received were very informative and constructive in helping us continue to improve the grant program, and ensure that we are meeting the main intent of the program, to preserve and interpret the historic confinement sites where Japanese Americans were detained during World War II in order to educate the public and future generations. The NPS would like to thank everyone who provided feedback and participated in the listening sessions for 2009. We greatly appreciate your input and continued involvement.

DENVER, COLORADO

Date: November 30, 2009

Time: 10 am—12 noon

Meeting Venue: National Park Service, Intermountain Regional Office

Presentation by: Kara Miyagishima

Other people who assisted: Greg Kendrick, Christine Whitacre

Number of attendees: 14

Participants: Amache Historical Society, Friends of Amache; Heart Mountain, Wyoming Foundation; National Trust for Historic Preservation; Topaz Museum; University of Denver; former internees (Amache, Rohwer); 9 News (media); and interested public

COMMENTS:

What made it a success?

- Significant interest in program based on number of applications received.
- Application process/program development very good (including listening sessions).
- Built upon existing projects and filled funding gap.
- Work with groups/communities to keep momentum going.
- Process—responsibility was placed with NPS who sought input from affected interests/communities.
- In attending informational meetings and hearing what other groups were applying for—applicants were able to improve their applications.
- The NPS did a good job.

What can we do differently?

- Publish names of reviewers after applications are awarded.
- Information made public re: why each project was chosen (strong points of winning proposals)
- Provide lists of participants—in listening sessions, meetings, applications. Was there significant participation by the people knowledgeable and interested in the sites?
- Technology—online application technical difficulties; on-line budget format was not easy to use—specific subcategories required redoing of budget formats by applicants.
- Having people knowledgeable and interested in the sites doing application evaluation (lack of transparency re: reviewers creates suspicion among applicants).
- Over time—make sure projects are balanced geographically to ensure maximum public education.
- Make sure national story is being told and take a strategic approach making (sure) no sites or parts of the story are under-represented.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Date: Tuesday, December 1, 2009

Time: 7:00 pm—9:00 pm

Meeting Venue: Japanese American Citizens League—Chicago Chapter

Presentation by: Rachel Franklin-Weekley

Other people who assisted: Phyllis Ellin

Number of attendees: 7

Participants: Japanese American Citizens League; Japanese American Service Committee; Nisei Post; former internees (Heart Mountain, Rohwer)

COMMENTS:

What made it a success?

- It's good to see oral history funded early in the program.
- There is no way to assess the success of the program without knowing more about the specific projects, their goals, outcomes, and accomplishments.
- The grant criteria are pretty good and are broad enough, don't make them more specific.

What can we do differently?

- Would like to see more information on results, products of the construction projects.
- The program should have an overall direction and goals.
- There should be more public outreach, promotion of the projects at the end.
- The NPS should take a greater role in the program.

Other Comments/Questions:

- When / how did this program start?
- How do we assist the Arkansas sites – Rohwer? There was a reunion group, is it still active?
- Required completion of the grant projects – by when?
- Please change the terminology used – should use the term “concentration camps.”
- The NPS should promote the projects through their public affairs office.
- Asked for a report on the status of on-going projects, the match generated, etc.

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

Date: Thursday, December 3, 2009

Time: 2:00 pm—4:00 pm

Meeting Venue: Little Rock Central High School NHS Visitor Center

Presentation by: Rachel Franklin-Weekley

Number of attendees: 7

Participants: Japanese American National Museum; Main Street, Dumas Arkansas; individuals interested and/or associated with Rohwer and Jerome; former internee (Rohwer); interested public

COMMENTS:

What made it a success?

No comments

What can we do differently?

- The NPS should take a more active role.
- The NPS should bring in professionals to evaluate the success of the program.
- The NPS needs to take responsibility for the program and make something unified.

Other Comments/Questions:

- Was the Rohwer Cemetery larger at one time?
- Need cultural landscape reports for Jerome and Rohwer.
- The Arkansas Archaeological Survey could do remote sensing at the sites, to locate extant resources. The Heritage program at Arkansas State University could be an applicant for a project at Rohwer.
- There is no base in Arkansas, no leadership.
- Should form a coalition that represents the Arkansas sites. Should have a national player involved, like JANM.
- The presentation didn't talk about education, didn't see it in any of the slides.
- The program has a hands-off attitude, but the issue is the preservation of the sites, themselves.
- We need to connect the dots. Do we want to link all the sites?
- Is there a national trail planned to link the sites?

HONOLULU, HAWAII

Date: Thursday, December 3, 2009

Time: 6:00 pm—8:00 pm

Meeting Venue: Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii

Presentation by: Frank Hays

Number of attendees: 5

Participants: Hawaii Community Services Council; Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii; Minatoishi Architects

COMMENTS:

What made it a success?

- The group was very pleased with the grant program and especially pleased that Hawaii was well represented in the grant awards in 2009.
- Smooth, painless process. The matching donation forms are easy to use.

What can we do differently?

- More time needed (it was rushed last year due to late appropriation). The group appreciated that the process is well underway for FY10.
- Need to provide notice that 3 bids will be required for consultant contracts. At least one organization had to rush to get those bids.
- Organizations should be able to receive more than 1 grant-if total dollar amount is under a certain amount.
- Additional Hawaii sites should be made eligible.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Date: Thursday, December 3, 2009

Time: 6:00 pm—8:00 pm

Meeting Venue: Japanese American Cultural and Community Center

Presentation by: Les Inafuku

Other people who assisted: Alisa Lynch

Number of attendees: 25

Participants: Amache Historical Society; Friends of Manzanar, Go For Broke/Hanashi Oral History Program; Heart Mountain, Wyoming Foundation; Japanese American Citizens League—Pacific Southwest District; Japanese American National Museum; Manzanar Committee; Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress; former internees (associated with Amache, Heart Mountain, Minidoka, Poston, and others); Rafu Shimpo (media)

COMMENTS:

What made it a success?

- Smooth process. Hit deadlines. The process went quickly. Didn't meander.
- Like the earlier deadline for 2010.
- Good information distribution and meetings. More than typical for other Federal grant programs.

What can we do differently?

- Concern regarding bias on review panel by not including Japanese Americans or former internees. There is a different sense if there is a Japanese American on the panel. They are the ones who were impacted. (Note: The FY09 review panel did include one descendant of a Japanese American internee.)
- Everyone is biased in one way or another.
- Want to know the criteria of how the review panel is selected and the make-up of the panel.
- Consider an advisory commission and/or a community representative on the panel. Also consider academics and those in Asian American studies.
- Concern about only allowing one proposal to be funded per group.
- Verify values of in-kind matches and how they are determined. Make that information available for all to use. i.e., hourly rates.
- Need more details about the grant proposals that were funded. A sentence and amount is not enough.
- Have a community rep for each camp involved in the process.
- Past successful grantees and community experts should be part of the process (i.e., those who are no longer eligible to apply).

- Find a way to record “short stories” – not all oral histories need to be in-depth. Focus on vignettes.
- Balance with hearing people’s stories in-depth. Different points of view of the same incidents.
- Example: middle school grants from Apple and IBM for students to record stories.
- Oral history product vs. use. quick interviews (You Tube sound bites) vs. in-depth. We need both.
- Multi-year project funding/phasing needs to be clarified. Ongoing benefits vs. ongoing funding.
- Some grants are multi-year. Year-to-year only works in very small amounts. Need to be able to get continuation funding for certain programs. Consider funding for future cycles. NPS should ask for set-asides for longer term projects.
- “Time is the enemy” for oral history and preservation. Prioritize time sensitivity. Preserve the things that time is destroying.
- Concept of oral histories needs to be broadened, not just one-on-one interviews. Include broader examples of what qualifies as an oral history for that category.
- Interpretation and Education – need to get things out to the public. Be as broad and creative as we can be in distributing the information. Exhibits, traveling program, internet, virtual centers.
- Don’t just wait for a big center and program – where are the smaller things that we can get out? Multi-year is key.
- Media perspective – need more information on the particulars of each grant. Whom to contact to get more information on the project. Get the message out through the media. Need better press information on the projects!
- Clearing acreage – reclamation of land. Everybody is talking about the camps, but what about other stories? Sugar beet harvest/farm labor camps. Alcohol/Synthetic rubber. Tell stories about how Japanese Americans helped the war effort. Untold stories of government motivations for putting people in the Intermountain states. Credit for doing the work. Camouflage nets in camps.
- Assembly center stories also need to be preserved and told.
- Assembly centers: Arcadia Historical Society show “Only What We Could Carry.”
- Evaluation. What’s being done to evaluate ongoing or future projects? How do we document success? Define what success is.
- Advocate for further development of undeveloped sites. Provide opportunities for all topic areas/sites/demonstration projects. Advocate for more money!
- Put a call out for specialists who are willing to volunteer their time to help the projects be successful. In-kind advisory positions.
- Education: have online resources. Centralize information for speakers, resources, etc.

Other Comments/Questions:

- Question whether they can match with existing funds or if they have to be new funds raised during the grant period.
- Question regarding retroactively crediting money invested. Concern about time frame.

- Problem with oral history: changing concepts of “what happened” – people remembering things differently. Conflicts within interviews.
- “Inaccuracies are the nature of oral histories.” Capture perceptions and feelings not dates.
- Value of individual vignettes in oral history.
- There are amazing discussions in small groups (like at an early Heart Mountain reunion). They should be recorded.
- Amache reunion had block sessions that involved grad students/archives.
- Manzanar At Dusk program – recording smaller groups. Interactions with former internees are rated as the best part of the program.
- Impacts on camps on surrounding areas. i.e., what Heart Mountain meant for the local community – farming. Canal brought water to the local area; clearing 1000 acres of shrub, raised crops, etc. Also, need to share that local benefit was a reason that Japanese Americans were brought to those areas; that was part of the government plan.
- Amache was rejected for trying to move barracks and a water tower that didn’t have documentation of sale, etc.
- Doesn’t like use of Granada or “Camp Amache” – use Amache.
- Concern re: euphemistic language. Concerted effort to standardize language. “Call them what they were.” Community groups need to adopt accurate terminology. Also place names – “Santa Anita” – people think it’s a city. Should be “Santa Anita Racetrack”
- Discussion re: negative reaction at some sites. Where is the “public relations” and “communications plan” for dealing with backlash against labels? How will people deal with terminology?

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Date: Wednesday, December 2, 2009

Time: 6:00pm—8:00pm

Meeting Venue: Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project

Presentation by: Anna Tamura

Number of attendees: 8

Participants: Bainbridge Japanese American Community; Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project; German American Internee Coalition; Historical Museum at Fort Missoula; Minidoka Pilgrimage Committee; Nisei Veterans; Seattle Nisei Veterans Committee; Wing Luke Asian Museum

COMMENTS:

What made it a success?

- Geographic distribution-(Getting the word out about the program and awards in 12 states)
- German internees at DOJ sites often overlooked. They have been very well received and accepted at the meetings. The group is pleased with Fort Missoula and Hawai'i projects that do some interpretation of German internees. Very successful and all-inclusive.
- Able to leverage the NPS Confinement Sites grant for other funding efforts (donors, other grant programs)- grant recipient projects have an elevated status and get more attention.

What can we do differently?

- Technical trouble with electronic form. The cursor always started in the middle of the blank space, instead of at the beginning.
- Would be great if the grant program could fund debt reduction.
- A criteria that gets at "bang for your buck" should be a more explicit evaluation criteria, such as cost effectiveness.
- Application submittals should be paperless rather than sending 10 hard copies. A suggestion could be that the administrative monies for the grant program could cover the printing and photocopying.

Other Comments/Questions:

- Is it possible to apply for additional funds in 2010 to supplement the existing grant for 2009?
- Can Friends of Minidoka apply for grant even though they don't have a signed agreement with NPS?

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Date: Friday, December 4, 2009

Time: 6:00pm—8:00pm

Meeting Venue: Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California

Presentation by: Tom Leatherman

Number of attendees: 14

Participants: Heart Mountain, Wyoming Foundation; Japanese American Citizens League—Watsonville-Santa Cruz; Marysville Japanese American Citizens League; National Parks Conservation Association; interested public

COMMENTS:

What made it a success?

- Want to compliment the NPS on the flexibility of the program. Good distribution of grants around the country.

What can we do differently?

- Need some help walking through the bureaucracy of the federal grant process.

