



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

## **Narrative Section of a Successful Application**

The attached document contains the grant narrative of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the NEH Division of Preservation and Access application guidelines at <http://www.neh.gov/divisions/preservation> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: A Century of Migration in Oceana County

Institution: Grand Valley State University

Project Director: Melanie Rebecca Shell Weiss

Grant Program: Common Heritage

## **Growing Community: A Century of Migration in Oceana County**

An application submitted to the  
National Endowment for the Humanities' Division of Preservation and Access and Division of Public  
Programs Common Heritage  
CFDA # 45.149

### ***A. What is the significance of this event to the community's members and its cultural institutions?***

Michigan currently has the fifth largest migrant population in the United States. The largest percentage of migrants – who hail primarily from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Texas, and the Gulf Coast -- work in Oceana County, which is located along the shores of Lake Michigan, in the northwestern part of the lower peninsula. These are migration patterns that stretch back over a century, forming the backbone of the region's agricultural industries. Yet for young people growing up in towns like Shelby, Hart, or Walkerville, few know much about their families' histories. Fewer still see themselves as part of the fabric of these communities. This is true for families with multiple generations of history in the region as well as for more recent newcomers. Divorced from a knowledge of their family ties and shared identities, these young people are less likely to see themselves as community members and to thrive in community institutions like schools. By the same token, non-Latino residents are also less likely to understand the deep history of their Latino neighbors or their shared community ties. For all of these reasons, the opportunity to invite Latino community members – migrant and year-round -- to gather in, digitize, and preserve their oral histories, family photographs, and kindred materials would be of tremendous benefit to the community of Oceana County.

Oceana's cultural institutions face a kindred set of challenges. The Oceana County Historical and Genealogy Society serves as the primary cultural heritage institution within the area. Its Research and Library Headquarters is located in a historic house in Hart, which is open one day a week (Wednesday) between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. The Society also operates a Historical Park, which includes five buildings and one storage building and is open for three hours on weekend afternoons during June, July, and August. They have no paid staff. Committed volunteers maintain all of the Society's genealogical materials, collected artifacts, and museum buildings. Volunteers also conduct tours of the museum, answer questions about Oceana history, and conduct fundraisers. The majority of their materials focus on the European immigrants and their descendants who have lived in the area. For the Historical Society, then, the opportunity to more fully represent the rich cultural heritage that makes up Oceana County will help increase use of their facilities as well as potentially increasing their volunteer base. It also will help the Society to reach a younger demographic of users, which is key to their long-term viability.

The success of this project is built upon the strong ties and trust El Centro Hispano de Oceana already enjoys within the Latino community. As the only central, Hispanic-serving agency in the county, their participation is essential to this project. Primarily a social service agency, leaders and staff at El Centro Hispano recognize that cultural heritage serves a vital role in this community. This effort supports ongoing work by El Centro to build a shared sense of community among the region's diverse Latinos, which includes well-established families from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Gulf Coast states as well as seasonal migrants and more recently arrived refugees from Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. At the same time, because El Centro Hispano is a social service agency, not a cultural heritage institution, the partnership represented here serves as a critical means of interweaving past and present, while strengthening ties across institutions that serve the Hart-Shelby-Walkerville communities.

GVSU's support for this project is critical and grows out of the university's regional, community-focused mission. While the focus of this effort is rooted directly in needs identified by the El Centro Hispano and the Oceana County Historical and Genealogical Society, neither of these organizations has the capacity for long-term digital archival preservation and access. Expertise in terms of oral history best practices, digital access models, and project management offered by GVSU's Kutsche Office of Local History and University Libraries' Special Collections & Archives will allow us to collect cultural resources with complete confidence that these materials will not only be preserved for the foreseeable future but also to make them broadly accessible. The Kutsche Office also has experience organizing and staffing history harvests elsewhere in West Michigan and owns the hardware necessary to support such an effort. Working in close collaboration with GVSU Special Collections & Archives will further ensure that we maintain best practices for capturing, naming, and describing these historic materials. Access copies of all materials collected will also be provided to the Historical Society for onsite viewing/listening. GVSU undergraduate students will gain valuable community-based learning experience as well as directed research and archival skills. The opportunity to work closely with middle and high school students in the area will also begin to seed mentoring relationships that will sow the seeds for more deeply engaged pipeline-to-college work across the Hart Public Schools.

***B. What arrangements need to be made to digitize the public's cultural heritage materials, to get information for the metadata describing each item, and to provide access to the digital copies?***

On Saturday, June 18, 2016, we will hold a one-day "history harvest" in the Hart Public Schools Auditorium, located in the Hart Middle School. The focus of this effort will be to document the family histories of the region's Latino families, through oral histories, digitized photographs, newspaper clippings, letters, journals, scrapbooks, and kindred materials. Using equipment owned by, or available to, the GVSU Kutsche Office of Local History, including flatbed scanners (4), laptops (4), iPads (4), digital video recorders (2), tripods (4), light kits (2), linear PCM audio recorders (10), digital cameras (2), and microphones (4), we will set up four digitation stations onsite in the Auditorium. We are fully equipped to be able to digitize printed material and two-dimensional images as well as recording oral histories. Scanning of two-dimensional objects will be done using iPads (for bound materials) or flatbed scanners owned by GVSU. We plan to use digital cameras to photograph three-dimensional objects at the native camera resolution of 300ppi, creating several views (ie. Rotating the objects). When doing this work, we follow the minimum digitization capture recommendations and file naming standards established by the American Library Association and the digital oral history recommendation of the Institute of Museum and Library Services Oral History in the Digital Age Initiative (OHDA).<sup>1</sup>

Two oral history stations will be set up outside the auditorium, in neighboring space where sound is easier to control. GVSU faculty, El Centro Hispano and Historical Society volunteers, GVSU students, and Hart Middle and High School volunteers will staff the digitization stations. Together the digitization teams will copy materials brought into the event, record descriptive information about the materials onto templates created by GVSU Special Collections & Archives staff, returning the originals plus a digital copy to attendees. Staff will also record descriptive information about each object from attendees using digital audio recorders as well as written notes. Those files will be labeled and stored along with other materials digitized from the donor.

Attendees will also be encouraged to share their stories, either alone or with family members. Oral histories will be conducted by GVSU faculty and/or El Centro Hispano volunteers. Video

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<sup>1</sup> ALA's capture recommendations: <http://www.ala.org/alcts/resources/preserv/minimum-digitization-capture-recommendations>; OHDA guidelines: (<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/best-practices/>)

recordings of the oral history interviews will be made using one of two GVSU-owned, digital video recorders. An audio recording will also be made as a back-up, again using GVSU-owned, digital audio recorders. In both cases (video and audio), recording levels and best practice recommendations will conform to current best practices for digital preservation, as established by the Library of Congress.<sup>2</sup> In some cases, a participant may decline to have a video recording made of their interview. In those cases, we will only use audio to record their memories. Signed informed consent and use agreements will be scanned and provided, along with copies of the interview, to the attendee.

Each digitization station will have at least one staffer who is fluent in Spanish. All interviewers will speak Spanish fluently in order to explain informed consent as well as permissions to community members. Informed consent and use agreements will be provided to attendees in English and in Spanish. A detailed description of informed consent procedures and intellectual property rights follows below. Final forms will also be reviewed and approved by GVSU legal counsel and GVSU's Human Research Review Committee, in consultation with staff of El Central Hispano, prior to the June 18 history harvest. At the event, we will distribute a survey to participants asking about how best to make the digital materials collected accessible to them.

Gathering in these materials is a critical first step. Equally important to this endeavor, however, is preserving these materials for the long-term and ensuring that they are accessible to the communities that provided them. We will do this in two ways: First, we will preserve these materials in GVSU Special Collections & Archives as well as making them full available virtually via their digital collections. Over the past eight years, GVSU Special Collections' focus has been on digitizing and making highlights of its holdings accessible to researchers online. Highlights of its analog collections are currently accessible via the Internet in CONTENTdm (<http://gvsu.cdmhost.com/cdm>). Second, we will provide access copies of the digital files created through the harvest to the Oceana County Historical and Genealogical Society for onsite use. The Kutsche Office of Local History will also create a bilingual gateway website to facilitate online access to these materials by English and Spanish speakers. The website will provide information about the project and link directly to GVSU's Digital Collections, El Centro Hispano, and the Oceana County Historical Society. Work to bring these materials fully online via GVSU Special Collections and Archive's digital collections, transcribing, and translating materials will continue through June 2017.

In Fall 2016, faculty advisers will work with the project director and El Central Hispano to hold a community dialogue event in Hart as part of Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations. That dialogue will showcase materials digitized as part of the history harvest event in June and solicit additional feedback about how to develop these materials and next steps toward making them most useful for community members. The dialogue will also provide a chance to start to talk with community members about what this history can teach us about the present and how we should envision the future of the Oceana County community. Goals of this dialogue will include highlighting themes of migration, community, belonging, national, cultural, and ethnic/racial identities, perseverance, and family.

GVSU's Kutsche Office also has a strong track record of documenting community-based histories, organizing community history harvests and community dialogues. Recent examples include the bilingual Youth Leadership Initiative in Southwest Grand Rapids (a collaborative project with Grandville Avenue Arts & Humanities that is working with Latino middle school students to

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<sup>2</sup> Our digital audio recorders are linear PCM. Our video equipment kits meet the minimum specifications recommended by Scott Pennington and Dean Rehberger, "Video Equipment: Guide to Selecting and Use," <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/video-equipment>

document their families' and neighborhood history) and Gi-gikinomaage-min ("We are all teachers"), a project documenting the urban Native American experience in Grand Rapids that has been supported by the Michigan Humanities Council. We trust this experience will serve us well in this Oceana County collaboration and look forward to the opportunity to work more deeply with, and to support, the cultural heritage and social service organizations there.

***C. In digitizing and providing access to the public's historical materials, what plans will be in place to deal with intellectual property rights and the permissions process?***

At every stage of this project we will employ best practices for obtaining permissions and informed consent. Project protocols and consent forms, in English and in Spanish, will be vetted and approved by GVSU's Human Subject Review Board and University Legal Counsel. University Legal Counsel will also review the deed of gift, which will be translated into Spanish and adapted from the current deed used by GVSU Special Collections and Archives.

Oral histories will be conducted with adults and with families. While most interviewees will be aged 18 and over, it is possible that some family interviews may include conversations among children and their parents. People younger than 18 years of age will only be interviewed with the signed consent of a parent or legal guardian. Interviewers, who will be limited to trained GVSU faculty and Hispanic Center staff, must respect the rights of interviewees not to discuss certain subjects and will clearly explain this option to all interviewees. All interviewers will receive training in best practices, as outlined by the Oral History Association for collecting oral histories and are required to abide by these guidelines.<sup>3</sup> They will also receive copies of the approved project protocols and specific instruction on how to obtain informed consent before any interviews are conducted. Training and materials will be provided by the Kutsche Office of Local History. A draft, English language version of the oral consent form is included in the appendices.

When making digital copies of two- and three-dimensional materials at the history harvest event, we will ask for attendees to sign an agreement, giving us permission to keep and manage the digital copies. This agreement will identify the project team, explain the purpose of this effort, and grant permission to the project team to preserve digital copies and to make those copies available for researchers and the public. We have also included an English-language draft of this agreement as an appendix.

***D. What kind or kinds of public programming are proposed?***

Outreach and community engagement are essential to the success of this effort. Community dialogues, held in connection with Hispanic Heritage events in September-October 2015, will introduce a broad community to this idea. Although GVSU participants in this project already have professional and personal ties to the Oceana County community, project staff will continue to grow these relationships through public and informal activities through Fall 2015. In January 2016, we will begin distributing "save the date" announcements advertising the June 18 event and begin soliciting attendance and "hosts" for the event. We will also recruit middle and high school participants through the Hart Public Schools, holding a ½-day training session in mid-May for volunteer staff and students. Dedicated outreach and recruitment will also resume in May as many migrant families begin arriving back in Michigan for the asparagus harvest.

The one-day "history harvest" event on Saturday, June 18 – which will be held at the Hart Public Schools Auditorium – will feature welcome remarks from staff at El Centro Hispano and community

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.oralhistory.org/do-oral-history/principles-and-practices>

leaders. Attendees will be invited to attend a community dialogue to be held at the end of the summer as part of Hispanic Heritage celebrations in September 2016. That event will feature “highlights” identified from the “history harvest” and a community discussion lead by Professors Nora Salas (Department of History, GVSU) and Andrew Schlewitz (Latin American Studies and Political Science, GVSU). Both Profs. Salas and Schlewitz are fluent in Spanish and specialize in migration and the Latino American experience. Each also has an established working relationship with community members and leaders within Oceana County’s Latino communities. In addition to highlighting how central these community-generated resources are to being able write the history of Oceana’s communities, a primary focus of the community dialogue will be to solicit input and guidance from community members about next steps. How can we best make these histories available to the communities that generated them? What do these resources teach us about life in Oceana County, past, present, and future? What remains to be done? These are just a few of the questions we plan to ask community attendees. Their responses will help us plan our own next steps as we strive to make these materials even more accessible to community members.

***E. What is the plan of work for the project?***

**Pre-project:** Outreach as part of Hispanic Heritage Month Celebrations 2015 (September-October) and ongoing collaborations among the partner institutions; finalize deed of gift/informed consent in Spanish and in English; secure feedback and approvals of project protocols, deed of gift/informed consent from GVSU HRRB and Legal Counsel; hold in-person meetings with community elders.

**Winter 2016 (January-April):** Project announced via news release in Oceana County and publications by partner institutions. Fliers distributed in community meeting, through local churches and businesses. Recruitment of Hart Public School students to participate in “history harvest” event. Planning for June event (finalize logistics, AV rentals).

**May 2016:** ½-day training session for volunteers

**June 18, 2016:** “History Harvest” at Hart Public Schools Auditorium

**Summer 2016 (July-August):** Processing of collected materials at GVSU for entry and access via CONTENTdm. Access copies of all materials collected provided to Oceana Historical Society. Transcription/translation of materials begins. Bilingual, gateway website created by GVSU Kutsche Office of Local History. “Highlights” identified from collections to be featured in digital collections. Follow-up and evaluation with partners. Planning for September community dialogue as part of Hispanic Heritage celebrations.

**Fall 2016 (September-December):** Community Dialogue event held as part of Hispanic Heritage Month. Compile results of feedback and conversation with community members. Share results of the dialogue with partners. Processing of materials continues, along with summaries of the oral histories, transcription, and translation of materials. Student research assistants, working for the Kutsche Office and through courses in the Modern Languages Department and Latin American Studies, will assist with the summaries and translation work. This is a model the Kutsche Office has used on past projects with great success.

**Winter 2017 (January-June):** Access copy of processed materials provided to Oceana County Historical and Genealogical Society. All materials available via GVSU Special Collections and Archives Digital Collections. Bilingual interview summaries completed. Final report submitted to NEH.