



Working with Jewish museums
as essential resources and vital centers.

November 16, 2018

Chairman Jon Parrish Peede
National Endowment for the Humanities

Dear Chairman Peede,

Thank you for accepting this proposal from the Council of American Jewish Museums (CAJM), a 501c3 nonprofit organization and the nation's leading forum and professional development organization for Jewish museums. We are grateful to have this opportunity to apply for a Chairman's Grant of \$30,000 to facilitate greater security preparedness for terrorist acts and acts of hate that could result in bodily injury or death for patrons or staff, as well as damage to holdings within Jewish museums.

CAJM is an association of institutions and individuals committed to enriching American and Jewish culture and enhancing the value of Jewish museums to their communities. We offer programs, networking, and learning opportunities to the Jewish-museum field, and highlight issues pertaining to Jewish culture. We work with Jewish museums across fifty communities and are the leading convener of Jewish museums in the United States. Our membership covers the country's largest Jewish museums, as well as a wide range of regional organizations. The vast majority of our member museums are small and mid-sized institutions that do not have the in-house expertise, staffing, or resources to prepare for man-made disasters or to implement updated security procedures. For many of our member institutions, we are the only professional development they access regularly.

In recent years, a number of Jewish museums and cultural organizations have faced violent acts, including the shootings at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Kansas City, and the Jewish Museum of Belgium. The Jewish Museum of Maryland and the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center also experienced anti-Semitic acts on their properties, and The Jewish Children's Museum in Brooklyn was evacuated for a bomb threat. Colleagues across the field of Jewish museums face slurs and threats, and need new training and emergency response strategies.

Jewish museums in America are outward facing institutions. They open their doors to broad publics to provide access to historic and cultural resources, learning opportunities, and expertise. Each day, Jewish museums balance their mandate to be open and accessible institutions with their responsibilities to protect their human and historic assets. Indeed, the rise of anti-Semitism was one of four priority topics recently addressed by CAJM's National Advisory Council (comprised of scholars and leading practitioners from a variety of humanities disciplines). The work of balancing accessibility and protection has never been more challenging for our field.

The tragic and senseless violence in Pittsburgh and the rise of hate crimes this year (currently 938 in 2018 that have targeted Jewish Americans) compels us to address this issue with newfound urgency. We believe it is essential to assist Jewish museums in gaining access to the best knowledge and practices for the security of their patrons, staff, and museum holdings in as timely a manner as possible.

CAJM is well prepared to draw upon and provide expertise in this area. We have a longstanding relationship with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as with Kinshasha Holman Conwill (Deputy Director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture) and with Corine Wegener (Director of the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative and partner in the Heritage Emergency Task Force). We have already assembled a core planning team from within our own leadership to shepherd this work, including Dr. Susan Bronson (CAJM Board Chair and Executive Director of the Yiddish Book Center), Colin Weil (CAJM Board Treasurer and Executive Director of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in New York), and Gabriel Goldstein (Past CAJM Board Chair and curator of the "Iraqi Jewish Archive" exhibition with National Archives).

In the immediate weeks ahead, we will be: doing outreach to identify the best and most relevant experts in this work; surveying the needs of our members in this area; and translating this thinking to particularly fit the needs of our small to mid-sized member institutions (which comprise the majority of our membership and have the fewest resources). We are confident that we can assemble the requisite expertise to provide necessary training and resources to our member organizations, and to fill an emergency need in the field.

Given the urgency of the current situation, we are hoping that this request merits NEH support. These funds will provide the resources necessary for CAJM to: 1) produce two 1-day emergency training seminars with experts in two different regions; 2) provide access to our colleagues who need this training; 3) create a PDF manual for member institutions on new practices in safety and emergency preparedness; 4) create an emergency response portal on our own website; and 5) increase field-wide discourse, knowledge, and communications for this ongoing work. The budget for this effort is as follows:

Fees for Training Experts	\$ 8,000
Meeting expenses (at 2 venues)	\$ 8,000
Travel for participants	\$ 5,000
Manual (expert input and review, design) & web portal	\$ 5,000
CAJM staff time	\$ 4,000
TOTAL REQUEST	\$30,000

We are deeply appreciative of your prompt consideration at this critical moment. We know that the months ahead are essential for core learning in our institutions and that we can have significant impact on the safety of our organizations and the people within them. As the convener for Jewish museums in America, there is no more important work for CAJM at this time, and your assistance will allow our response to happen without delay while also investing in knowledge, practices, and methods that will have ongoing impact.