

## Project/Program Basics

### Project/Program Name

ECMA Field Trip Initiative

### Request Amount

\$225,000

### Classification of Grant

EDUCATION

### Project/Program Summary

*Please provide a BRIEF description of your project/program and specifically what your monetary request will support.*

Due to ever-increasing constraints on school budgets, funding for student field trips has plummeted over the past decade. Nowhere has this change been noticed more immediately than at our local museums. Our students are missing out on learning what it means to be from Elkhart County, and the museums are losing what was once a predictable and vital source of revenue support--annual student field trips.

The Elkhart Museum Association, Inc. (now in the process of being officially renamed Elkhart County Museum Association, Inc., hereafter referred to as "ECMA") has carefully laid out a plan to create a sustainable privately funded program that will provide free field trips to resident students in Elkhart County seeking to visit local Elkhart County museums. The ECMA is in the process of establishing a dedicated fund at the ECCF with the sole purpose of being a repository for public donations to this program.

This new program will start by serving third, fourth and fifth grade students from all Elkhart County public schools, private schools and home schools. Each student in these grades will be eligible each year to receive two free field trips to any of the 20 ECMA museums located in Elkhart County. At total of 54,000 student field trip experiences will occur over these three years. This program covers transportation costs as well as museum admissions.

In short, this program will restore the path of Elkhart County students learning about their home community and what makes Elkhart County unique.

### Matching Request

*Is your organization asking the Foundation to match an amount you will/have raised?*

Yes

### Multi-Year Request

*Is your organization seeking funding for more than one year?*

Yes

**Match or Multi-year Explanation**

*If you are asking us to Match or provide Multi-year funding please explain.~ Word Limit 250*

ECMA is requesting a three-year commitment from ECCF to help firmly establish this transformative educational program. The annual budget for each of the first three years of operation will be \$150,000 per year--total 3-year budget of \$450,000. We are requesting 50% support from ECCF (\$225,000), and ECMA will raise the remaining 50% (\$225,000) in a challenge match format over the next three years.

**Annual Costs:**

Note, we will distribute \$135,000 total each year (\$90,000 in admissions to museums plus \$45,000 in transportation stipends to schools). The remaining \$15,000 in each annual budget will go toward web site/scheduling costs (\$600), and a part-time, 24-hour per week, program coordinator (\$14,400). The contract coordinator position will NOT be paid with ECCF funds, but will be the sole responsibility of the ECMA portion of the funding. ECCF funds will be used exclusively for the the purpose of providing student field trip admissions and student transportation stipends. This program is designed to serve 9,000 students annually (all third, fourth and fifth graders residing in Elkhart County), each student receiving two free field trips each year. However, this program is scalable (either up or down) contingent upon the acquisition of challenge match funds and ECCF funding. A student quota table has been calculated based upon enrollment statistics provided by the State of Indiana Department of Education to create a fair and equitable means to scale the program based on size of each school system.

**Project/Program Request Type**

*Is this a new or ongoing program or a one-time project?*

NewProjectorProgram

**Anticipated Project Start Date**

08/01/2013

**Anticipated Project End Date**

07/01/2016

## The Details

### Community Need

*What is the community need to be addressed and who/what is the constituency to be served? (Please include information such as how they will benefit and how many you expect to serve)*

School field trips have been on a rapid decline over the past decade due to ever-shrinking school budgets. The two principal obstacles are the admission costs of attending the field trip destination and the transportation costs of getting the students to and from these sites. Students are not getting the quality "out of the classroom" experiences that enrich their curriculum, and compounding the problem, local museums and interpretive sites have seen admission revenues plummet due to these "lost field trips." If current trends continue, these budget constraints on schools will not be reversing anytime soon, so every community must decide for itself, "will we take care of our own using private funding?" when it comes to field trips. The ECMA and ECCF are in a unique position to provide a national leadership position on this issue plaguing both students and museums by developing a sustainable model that can be replicated by other communities who place a high value on the educational importance of field trips.

Implementation of this program will serve two important Elkhart County constituencies--students and museums. First, the elementary school students (grades 3-5) residing within Elkhart County will be given the opportunity to learn more about their county than ever before. Approximately 9,000 students in these three grades reside in the county at any one time. This program will provide two free field trips to each of these 9,000 students each year. The program covers the cost of admissions for the museums and interpretive sites as well as transportation costs to take the students to the various sites.

Based upon current enrollment numbers, the following quota table has been produced to show the number of field trips that will be distributed to the various school systems based upon a fully funded 2 trips per student per year program.

Elkhart County School System Academic Year Quota of ECMA student field trips\*

Baugo Community Schools 902  
Concord Community Schools 2,288  
Elkhart Community Schools 5,798  
Fairfield Community Schools 956  
Goshen Community Schools 2,972

Middlebury Community Schools 2,036  
Wa-Nee Community Schools 1,442  
Elkhart County Private/Parochial/Amish schools 1,046  
Home schools 560

Total ECMA Field Trips 18,000

The second constituency are the 20 museums and interpretive sites represented by the members of the ECMA. These sites include: Amish Acres, Bonneyville Mill, Elkhart County Historical Museum, Elkhart Environmental Center, ETHOS, Hall of Heroes Super Hero Museum, Goshen Historical Museum, Havilah Beardsley House, Jimtown Historical Museum, Middlebury Community Historical Museum, Midwest Museum of American Art, Nappanee Center/Evelyn Culp Heritage Collection, National New York Central Railroad Museum, Oxbow County Park, RV/MH Hall of Fame Museum, Ruthmere, Time Was Museum, Wakarusa Historical Museum, Wellfield Botanic Gardens, and Woodlawn Nature Center. Collectively these organizations tell not only the story of Elkhart County, but also the role Elkhart County has played and continues to play in today's global economy. While the primary category focus of this grant application is education, the arts and culture community clearly stands to benefit from this program as well.

#### Effectiveness

*How will this project/program improve your organization's effectiveness, reduce costs and/or promote self-sufficiency?*

The ECMA Field Trip Initiative will be the primary focus of ECMA operations. Our organization is a collective consortium of museums and interpretive sites that has a history of advocating for the critical role that cultural organizations play in the quality of life of Elkhart County residents. We see our role as one where lessons in the classroom are put to practice in real life, and we provide the experiences that help to give life a sense of aesthetic beauty, historical meaning, and scientific purpose. Traditionally, ECMA's main focus has been to cross-promote each other's organizations and collaboratively market our assets to create a cultural synergy for visitors and educators. This new field trip initiative will be a quantum leap forward in our effectiveness to collectively impact the residents of Elkhart County in a positive manner.

The significance of re-establishing a viable school field trip revenue stream to the museums and interpretive sites of Elkhart County cannot be understated. Of critical importance in the design of this program is the fact that this funding will force our local museums to a higher standard of

operation and interpretive excellence. The logic behind this goal is simple and valid. If you give schools free field trips, they will use them (see results pilot program in "Goals" question below). So schools will have many choices for where to go on their free field trips, but there will be a limited pool of resources. Therefore, the museums and interpretive sites will compete for these revenue dollars by offering better educational opportunities, or suffer the consequences of neglecting these needs. The result is expected to be an overall enhancement and improvement in the quality of services offered by the museums and sites.

A modest portion of this program's annual budget allows for an automated field trip booking system (SuperSaas) that will streamline the scheduling of group tours for all ECMA sites, thereby creating an efficiency of scale through cooperation. The ECMA will also hire a part time contract field trip coordinator position who will assist museums and sites with development of pre-visit classroom activities, pre/post student surveys, and confirm the scheduling of all field trips with teachers and museums/sites. These two portions of the annual program budget will be funded exclusively by ECMA raised funds, not ECCF funds. All ECCF funds will be used to fund field trip admissions and/or transportation stipends.

Lastly, plans are currently underway to establish an ECCF designated fund for the sole purpose of supporting the ECMA Field Trip Program. Through aggressive solicitation and legacy gift planning, we hope to build this new fund to a level within five years time that will create a self-sustaining principal (\$3 million) that will require no additional outside support to fund the ongoing field trip program.

## Goals

*Describe your project/program goals and activities planned to accomplish these goals. (This should include information such as measurable numeric goals, tracking information, and a timetable for accomplishing these goals)*

The programs goals are quite simple--we believe that field trip experiences greatly enhance scholastic learning objectives, and our ultimate goal is to provide Elkhart County resident students with the best possible understanding of their community roots.

A pilot program was executed to prove this point on a smaller scale in academic year 2012-13 using private funds that provided free field trips to two Elkhart museum sites. INOVA Federal Credit Union and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, Inc. cooperatively sponsored the 3rd grade students of all the Elkhart Community Schools for free field trips to Ruthmere and the Havilah Beardsley House. We had 100% participation of

all ECS elementary schools. A total of 882 students and approximately 125 teachers and adult chaperones participated.

As part of the program preparation, a task force was created with the help of the ECS Superintendent Dr. Rob Haworth and ECS Director of Curriculum Dr. Bradley Sheppard. A group of five ECS teachers and two Ruthmere staff developed pre-visit materials and a learning growth measurement method. An 18-question pre-visit/post-visit online survey instrument was designed by the task force and implemented in ECS school computer labs to measure learning growth.

The pre-visit survey measured the baseline knowledge of the students. The aggregate pre-visit score of correct answers was 38.65% for the entire sample, just a tick higher than a purely random correct score of 35.29%. In essence, we can say that students arrived on site the day of their field trip with very little or no special knowledge about the history of Elkhart, the Beardsley family or Ruthmere. Post-trip survey results showed a marked improvement of nearly 70% over the pre-visit scores with an average correct answer score of 65.48%. While there is still much room for future growth, 70% improvement certainly appears significant as the result of a 2.5 hour field trip, especially if this experience has created an indelible memory for these students.

In similar fashion, each ECMA museum will develop its own activities, pre/post surveys for this larger initiative and report the results of field trip learning objectives to schools and parents. This increased level of accountability will motivate ECMA sites to continually improve the quality of their visitor experiences if they hope to remain competitive in attracting future school trips.

The fact that field trips have greatly declined over the past decade and the negative impact that has had on the outlook of a generation of youth is a topic of much discussion. The concept of "Indiana brain drain," Indiana's best and brightest young students taking their talents away from their home state once their education is completed, may well be reflective of the fact that these youth were never truly inspired to think of their home as someplace special, someplace worthy of staying. Local field trips give students a sense of community identity and pride like few other experiences, and an overarching goal of this program over time is to restore that invaluable sense of community pride in Elkhart County.

*Please tell us about your organizations overall/ongoing partnership efforts with other organization(s) in our community in order to support collaboration through shared - goals, resources, responsibility, and accountability. Please also include any information on commitments from these organizations with yours.*

The proposed ECMA Field Trip Initiative is the very definition of collaboration. It begins with the ECMA, a consortium group of museums and interpretive sites who have banded together under the concept of "strength in numbers" to achieve a variety of goals. The ECMA's first goal is attain collective financial sustainability through cooperative marketing. To this end, in 2012 the ECMA (with the assistance and support of the Elkhart County Convention and Visitors Bureau) developed a cooperative, county-wide marketing brochure and accompanying free cell/smartphone tour of all 20 ECMA sites. This instrument helps to provide a "critical mass" of interest in attracting visitors from the Toll Road and Indiana welcome centers from across the state. In similar fashion, the ECMA will draw upon the strength of its membership to ensure that this program provides quality experiences to the students of our county. Letters of commitment to this program from ECMA member organizations are being provided under separate cover.

The Elkhart County school systems (public, private, and home school network) are key collaborative partners in this program. Elkhart Community Schools took a lead role in the development of the pilot field trip program in 2012-13 with Ruthmere and the Havilah Beardsley House. As the largest system in the county, this system's past and continued participation is a key to the validity that field trips serve as meaningful educational enhancements. All school systems within the county have expressed strong support for this proposal and a willingness to participate (see letters of support under separate cover). Admittedly, the schools have the most to gain if this program is funded and most to lose if it is not funded. We have already demonstrated through the pilot program that schools, teachers and students desire to take field trips when resources are available. Furthermore, the pilot program clearly demonstrated that students learn and retain a substantial base of new knowledge from a field trip experience.

The final partners to this program are the residents and businesses of Elkhart County. Two organizations have already stepped forward to show their support (INOVA FCU and Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, Inc.), but many more will answer the call when the program goals are released to the press and the merits of this efficient use of resources get wide attention.

## Comparables

*Name other organizations that provide comparable services in our our service area. (If your organization provides unique services, please also explain)*

No other organization in Elkhart County (or anywhere in the U.S. that we could find in our search) provides a comparable service of offering a clearinghouse of free educational field trip experiences through one collective cooperative of service providers. There do exist isolated pools of resources that provide field trip grants to individual schools or sometimes entire school systems, but these require time from the school administrators and often teachers to fill out and submit grant forms for each and every field trip. The process is neither efficient nor comprehensive from a curriculum standpoint.

Funding the field trips is really just the beginning. Field trips not only have to be a regular, integrated part of the educational curriculum, but they also must be improved to ensure that real learning objectives are achieved. The ECMA has in its long range plans the development of a comprehensive Elkhart County Curriculum Guide, a single document that will the assemble Indiana State Standards in Education (including Common Core Standards where applicable), place these standards in the context of field trip learning objectives, and create a teacher-friendly "How To Use Field Trips in Your Classroom" manual for all 20 ECMA sites. At present many, but not all, of the ECMA sites have developed a field trip justification document to give schools a tool for rationalizing field trips to their site. These individual documents, while helpful, are not consistent from one organization to the next, and require teachers to do large amounts of leg work in planning a field trip day that coordinates different sites. While the development of the Elkhart County Curriculum Guide lies outside the scope of this grant application, it will be the next logical step toward improving the overall quality of field trips in Elkhart County. We intend to gather massive amounts of data this first year of the ECMA Field Trip Initiative to help direct the structure and design of the eventual Curriculum Guide.

## If denied?

*In the event that funding is denied, what should happen to this initiative?*

In the event that funding is denied, unfortunately, this program will have a large setback. Public support for this program is expected to be very high, and the challenge grant format for raising matching funds will come from a

broad array of constituents (local financial institutions and private donors who promote educational initiatives, parent-teacher organizations, churches, etc.). Without ECCF support these groups may indeed still attempt to rally a collective pool of resources, however, there is a risk of losing the momentum behind a community-wide transformative program that ECCF participation would bring to the table. PTOs have been struggling to keep pace with school funding cuts to help with field trips, and based upon the decline of field trips in the past decade, they clearly have not been able to bridge the gap.

The ECMA Field Trip Initiative, with ECCF funding at its heart, will provide the community with a rallying point by which we can maximize resources and focus efforts into one collective effort.

#### Responsible Staff Member

*Name of the person on your staff who will be responsible for this project/program? What are their qualifications to carry out this specific project/program?*

William A. Firstenberger, Executive Director of the Ruthmere Foundation, Inc., and President of the ECMA, has over twenty-two years of experience in the fields of museum management, grants management, historic preservation, restoration project management, interpretation planning, exhibit development, personnel management, coordination of projects with experts, and Indiana history. Mr. Firstenberger's curriculum vitae is available upon request.

The part time program coordinator contract position will be filled contingent upon ECMA matching fund raising. We will seek for this position a seasoned educator with significant experience in planning and managing elementary age student field trips.

#### Previous Funding from ECCF

*Have you received funding from the Fund for Elkhart County in the past? If yes, when, what amount and the name of the project/program? (Please note: if you need assistance, please call our office)*

The Elkhart Museum Association, Inc. (presently in process of being renamed the Elkhart County Museum Association, Inc.) recieved a grant award from the ECCF in 2008 for \$1,000. This grant was for the design and production of a cooperative marketing brochure.

At the time of this 2008 grant, the Elkhart Museum Association comprised 7

organizations, all located in the City of Elkhart with the exception of the Elkhart Historical Museum in Bristol. The ECMA membership currently stands at 18 organizations and represents every community in Elkhart County.

### Publicity

*Please indicate how your organization, if awarded, would publicise your project/program giving credit for ECCF support. As a gentle reminder, please be sure any released publications have our full name the Elkhart "County" Community Foundation. Thank you*

The ECMA anticipates that the Elkhart County Field Trip Initiative will be an extremely popular media topic, suitable for numerous press releases and coverage. Ample opportunities for credit to the ECCF will be made through promotional literature that will go to schools and potential matching donors as well as on the ECMA web site, the place where all field trip booking will occur.

We expect a wide array of media coverage, both local and national, on this ground-breaking program. A preliminary search of private funding programs for school field trips has revealed a few examples of individual sources of support for specified trips (ie. Target grants), and other examples of individual donors sponsoring field trips for individual schools or grades within schools. However, no example has been found that would be a comparable model to this proposed program, where an entire community at the county level has undertaken the private funding of field trips for all students, across all school systems, to take field trips at a host of local museums and interpretive sites. Elkhart County has a unique and timely opportunity to be a leader on an educational issue that faces the entire nation.