Application to host

CROSSROADS: Change in Rural America

A Museum on Main Street exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and Illinois Humanities

Touring Illinois from September 8, 2018, to June 22, 2019, in conjunction with the State Bicentennial

Application deadline: August 15, 2017
Thank you for your interest!

We at Illinois Humanities are pleased and honored that your organization and your community are interested in hosting Crossroads: Change in Rural America, the newest Museum on Main Street exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and Illinois Humanities. Please read all of the following information carefully. Then, please complete all three parts of this application (“Basic Information,” “Descriptive Content,” and “Supporting Materials”) and submit it by August 15, 2017, at 6 PM. If you have any questions or need any assistance as you’re completing this application, please contact Matt Meacham, program manager for access with Illinois Humanities, at matt.meacham@ilhumanities.org or (312) 422-5589. He’ll be happy to hear from you!

About Museum on Main Street:

Museum on Main Street is a partnership between the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and state humanities councils, including Illinois Humanities. It not only enables Illinoisans to experience Smithsonian-produced exhibitions in their own communities but also gives the local cultural organizations that host these exhibitions opportunities to enhance their roles within their communities and regions, attract new audiences and volunteers, expand their knowledge and resource bases, and develop skills that can be applied toward future exhibitions and programs.

Periodically – usually once every one to two years – Illinois Humanities facilitates a statewide tour of a traveling exhibition on a significant theme in American culture produced by the Smithsonian Institution. Illinois Humanities invites cultural organizations throughout the state, including museums, libraries, arts councils, historical societies, and educational institutions, to apply to host the exhibition. Six organizations, usually in communities with populations under 25,000, are selected to do so. (Because Crossroads: Change in Rural America is intended especially for rural communities, we plan to consider applications only from communities with populations under 10,000, and we will give preference to communities located in counties with population densities under 200 people per square mile.)

Each host organization displays the Smithsonian-produced exhibition for a period of six weeks. It also produces a locally focused companion exhibition linking the subject matter of the Smithsonian-produced exhibition to the history and culture of its own community or region. Additionally, it presents public programs that engage audiences and participants with the topics and themes of the exhibitions. Through both individual consultation and group workshops, Illinois Humanities staff members and consultants work closely with each host organization for at least a year prior to opening as they plan and prepare.

A Museum on Main Street exhibition requires significant investments of time, energy, and creativity from the host organizations and their community partners. Host organizations and communities reap significant benefits from their efforts, however, and often continue to do so long after the exhibition has concluded.
About Crossroads: Change in Rural America:

In 1900, about 40% of Americans lived in rural areas. By 2010, less than 18% of the U.S. population lived in rural areas. In just over a century, massive economic and social changes moved millions of Americans into urban areas. Yet, only 10% of the U.S. landmass is considered urban.

Many Americans consider rural communities to be endangered and hanging on by a thread—suffering from brain drain, inadequate schools, and a barren, overused landscape. Why should revitalizing the rural places left behind matter to those who remain, those who left, and those who will come in the future? Because there is much more to the story of rural America.

Crossroads: Change in Rural America offers small towns a chance to look at their own paths to highlight the changes that affected their fortunes over the past century. The exhibition will prompt discussions about what happened when America’s rural population became a minority of the country’s population and the ripple effects that occurred.

Despite the massive economic and demographic impacts brought on by these changes, America’s small towns continue to focus creatively on new opportunities for growth and development. Economic innovation and an emphasis upon the cultural facets that make small towns unique, comfortable, and desirable have helped many communities create their own renaissance. The future is bright for much of rural America as small towns embrace the notion that their citizens and their cultural uniqueness are important assets.

The exhibition is expected to consist of an introduction and five sections: Identity (examining the role of rural culture within American culture as a whole, past and present), Land (describing the views of various cultural communities regarding the use and management of land and examining the roles of land in the formation of economies and communities), Community Development (discussing the emergence of rural communities and the evolution of their economic and social structures, especially during the period of rapid change in the mid-20th century), Persistence (contemplating how rural communities respond effectively to challenges in the 21st century), and Stories (presenting a variety of case studies and narratives from throughout rural America with the goal of inspiring reflection and discussion about the future).

The co-curators of Crossroads: Change in Rural America are southwestern Illinois native Dr. Debra Reid, curator of agriculture and the environment at The Henry Ford in Michigan and professor emeritus of history and historic administration at Eastern Illinois University, and Dr. Ann McCleary, professor of history and director of the Public History Center at the University of West Georgia.
About the 2018-2019 Illinois tour of Crossroads: Change in Rural America and the host selection process:

Crossroads: Change in Rural America will visit six Illinois communities between September 8, 2018, and June 22, 2019. The orientation workshop for representatives of all host organizations will take place on October 26-27, 2017, at the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities in Edwardsville, Illinois. Additionally, representatives of each organization will be asked to participate in three other workshops – an exhibition and program planning workshop, an installation workshop, and a docent workshop – as well as a post-tour review meeting.

Because the exhibition tour will coincide with the Bicentennial of Illinois statehood, Illinois Humanities plans to conduct several programs that will connect the content of Crossroads: Change in Rural America with opportunities to reflect upon our state’s history and possibilities for its future. These may include a series of roundtable discussions about issues that affect both rural and urban communities featuring people representing both perspectives, programs examining how the evolution of transportation methods and routes has affected Illinois communities, and possibly other initiatives. Organizations and communities that host the exhibition may be invited (but not required) to participate in some of these activities.

In keeping with the subject matter of Crossroads: Change in Rural America, Illinois Humanities invites organizations in Illinois communities with populations under 10,000 to apply to participate. Preference will be given to organizations in counties with population densities under 200 residents per square mile* and to organizations that have never previously hosted Museum on Main Street exhibitions, but organizations that do not fit those descriptions are nonetheless welcome to apply.

Illinois Humanities will select the host organizations based on their geographic distribution, the strengths of their preliminary proposals for companion exhibitions and programs, their potential for organizational growth, the potential for community involvement (as indicated by letters of support), and availability of a suitable location, including at least 800 square feet of display space and 8.5-foot ceilings.

Applications must be submitted electronically or postmarked by August 15, 2017, at 6 PM. A complete application will include an application form (page 5 of this document), an application narrative (described on page 6 of this document), and two letters of support (described on page 7 of this document). Those who have questions or need assistance while completing this application are welcome to contact Matt Meacham, program manager for access with Illinois Humanities, at matt.meacham@ilhumanities.org or (312) 422-5589. Selections will be announced in September 2017.

*For information about counties’ population densities, please see https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/illinois/population-density#table.
Illinois Humanities will provide the following to each host organization:

- Rental of the Smithsonian exhibition for a six-week period;
- A manual providing information about installation, object collection and conservation, public relations, and evaluation procedures;
  - Promotional resources, such as posters and postcards;
  - Educational resources, such as curricular materials and docent handbooks;
- At least partial reimbursement of travel and lodging costs associated with workshops and meetings;
- Up to $2,000 in grant funds to support humanities-based public programs (e.g., festivals, lectures, performances, film series, artifact collections, workshops, reading-and-discussion programs, dramatizations, etc.), as well as companion exhibition curation and design;
- A consultant who will assist with companion exhibition curation and design and staff who will assist with planning of public programs.

Illinois Humanities will ask each host organization to...

- Designate a volunteer or staff member to serve as project director for the duration of the exhibit and attend four workshops: orientation; exhibition and program planning; installation; and docent workshops; as well as a post-tour review meeting;
- Curate and design a companion exhibition that relates the themes of Crossroads: Change in Rural America to the history and culture of its community or region;
- Plan and implement at least three humanities-based public programs in conjunction with the exhibition;
  - Track all staff and volunteer time, facilities, and other resources donated to the project, and provide a report of this local cost sharing, as well as attendance figures, at the project’s conclusion;
- Arrange and pay for transport of the exhibition to its community (the cost of which is likely to be in the $300 to $1,000 range);
- Have at least one volunteer or staff member present whenever the exhibition is open to the public. (Note: This usually isn’t as difficult as it might sound. Members of local civic organizations, student groups, etc. are often happy to volunteer for that role.)
**BASIC INFORMATION:**

Applications must be submitted electronically at https://www.ilhumanities.org/program/museum-on-main-street/ or postmarked and mailed to Illinois Humanities, 17 North State Street, Suite 1400, Chicago, IL 60602-3296, by August 15, 2017, at 6 PM. A complete application will include “Basic Information” (this page), “Descriptive Content” (explained on page 6), and “Supporting Materials” (explained on page 7). Those who have questions or need assistance while completing this application are welcome to contact Matt Meacham, program manager for access with Illinois Humanities, at matt.meacham@ilhumanities.org or (312) 422-5589.

Organization: ___________________________________________________________________

Project director: _________________________________________________________________

Address: _______________________________________________________________________

City, state, and ZIP code: __________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________  Fax: ________________  E-mail: _____________________________

Number of full-time staff/volunteers: _______________________________________________

Number of part-time staff/volunteers: ______________________________________________

Please select your preferred dates for hosting Crossroads: Change in Rural America from the options below. Please indicate your first and second choices with “1” and “2,” respectively:

September 8*-October 20, 2018: ________                October 27-December 8, 2018: ________


March 23-May 4, 2019: ________                                          May 11-June 22, 2019: ________

*The first organization to host the exhibition will be asked to host the installation workshop on September 5, 2018. Representatives of all of the host organizations will attend the workshop to learn how to assemble and install the exhibition and will assist in assembling and installing it at the first venue. An additional note: because Illinois will be in the first cohort of states to host Crossroads: Change in Rural America, fabrication of the exhibition probably will not be complete until very shortly before it is to be transported to the first venue. Therefore, it might be necessary for the first host organization to do some troubleshooting and make some minor changes or repairs to the exhibition in consultation with the Smithsonian staff within the first several days after it is installed. For that reason, Illinois Humanities recommends that the first host organization plan to wait until sometime between September 12 and September 15, 2018, to hold any major public events associated with the exhibition (such as a grand opening, media reception, etc.).
DESCRIPTIVE CONTENT:

Applications must be submitted electronically at https://www.ilhumanities.org/program/museum-on-main-street/ or postmarked and mailed to Illinois Humanities, 17 North State Street, Suite 1400, Chicago, IL 60602-3296, by August 15, 2017, at 6 PM. A complete application will include “Basic Information” (page 5), “Descriptive Content” (explained on this page), and “Supporting Materials” (explained on page 7). Those who have questions or need assistance while completing this application are welcome to contact Matt Meacham, program manager for access with Illinois Humanities, at matt.meacham@ilhumanities.org or (312) 422-5589.

Directions: Please write responses to the following questions.

1. Please describe your organization’s mission, history, and governance. How many staff members and/or volunteers participate in your organization’s projects on a regular basis? If you have a website, please provide the address. (Maximum length: 250 words.)

2. Please describe the venue in which your organization would display Crossroads: Change in Rural America. Please include information about square footage, ceiling height, and security and climate conditions. Please also describe any features of the venue that might present challenges (such as columns or other structural features that might limit options for arranging the exhibition, windows or lights in potentially inconvenient locations, etc.). (Maximum length: 250 words.)

3. Please describe any community resources or potential partnerships (with other organizations, institutions, businesses, etc.) that could contribute toward the success of this project. (Maximum length: 400 words.)

4. Please identify at least two significant changes in rural American life that have affected your community or its immediate surroundings during the past century. (The nature of these changes could be economic, social, cultural, political, technological, transportation-related, environmental, educational, artistic, religious, or otherwise.) Briefly explain how your community or its vicinity has experienced those changes. How would you explore those changes in your locally focused companion exhibition and/or your public programs? How would you go about putting them into context and discussing them in some degree of depth? (Maximum length: 1,000 words.)

5. Please relate (or summarize) at least one story about changes that have occurred within your community or its immediate surroundings during the past century that you would like to tell through your locally focused companion exhibition and/or your public programs? In your opinion, what is the potential value of telling that story (or those stories)? (Maximum length: 500 words.)

6. Optional: What else would you like Illinois Humanities to know about your organization, your community or area, and/or your potential plans for your locally focused companion exhibition and/or your public programs? (Maximum length: 300 words.)
SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

Applications must be submitted electronically at https://www.ilhumanities.org/program/museum-on-main-street/ or postmarked and mailed to Illinois Humanities, 17 North State Street, Suite 1400, Chicago, IL 60602-3296, by August 15, 2017, at 6 PM. A complete application will include “Basic Information” (page 5), “Descriptive Content” (explained on page 6), and “Supporting Materials” (explained on this page). Those who have questions or need assistance while completing this application are welcome to contact Matt Meacham, program manager for access with Illinois Humanities, at matt.meacham@ilhumanities.org or (312) 422-5589.

1. Please provide three to eight photographs of the venue in which you would intend to display Crossroads: Change in Rural America, illustrating relevant features. You may either include prints of the photographs in the application materials that you mail to Illinois Humanities or e-mail digital versions (in any standard format, such as JPEG, GIF, TIFF, PNG, etc.) to Matt Meacham at matt.meacham@ilhumanities.org.

2. Please submit two letters indicating local support for your application to host Crossroads: Change in Rural America.

   One letter should be from a local public official, such as your mayor, a member of your village board or city council, your village or city clerk, one of your county commissioners, your county clerk, etc.

   The other letter should be from a representative of a local organization, institution, or business, such as a civic or cultural group (e.g., a Lions club, Rotary club, American Legion post, scout troop, 4-H club, etc.), a museum or historic site, a visitors center or tourism bureau, a library, a school, a house of worship, a chamber of commerce, a retail outlet, a restaurant, etc.

   Both letters should explain why your community or area would be well suited to host Crossroads: Change in Rural America and how it might benefit from doing so. They should also provide assurance that the exhibition and activities associated with it will have community-wide or region-wide support and that people and organizations other than your own will participate. Each letter should be a maximum of two typed pages long. You may either include copies of the letters, signed by the writers, in the application materials that you mail to Illinois Humanities or ask the writers to send them as e-mail messages to Matt Meacham at matt.meacham@ilhumanities.org by August 15, 2017, at 6 PM. (If the letters are not included in the application materials that you mail to us, we will assume that the writers will e-mail them to Matt Meacham.)

About the photograph on the cover of this document:

The photograph on the cover of this document depicts a rural crossroads: the intersection of County Road 5 and Murphysboro Road in southeastern Randolph County, Illinois. The contrast between the older, hand-built, wooden outbuilding on the right and the newer, fabricated, metal outbuilding on the left illustrates some of the trends that Crossroads: Change in Rural America will address. (Photograph by Matt Meacham, Illinois Humanities.)