Blue Whales Application FAQ

Eligibility

Q: How do I know if my library is eligible to apply?

A: All public and tribal libraries in the United States, territories and protectorates are eligible to apply. School and university libraries in the US that host free programs for the general public are also eligible to apply.

Q: I work at a military library, are we eligible?

A: Some military libraries may be eligible to apply, please contact your on-base chain of command to determine eligibility.

Q: The application mentions that reaching "underserved and underrepresented" audiences is a major goal of the program. How do you define this term?

A: Underserved and underrepresented refers to folks who have been excluded from STEM and science fields and careers, from participating fully in society, or benefiting from public services. Living and working in a community populated by these groups is not sufficient to apply to this grant. Please ensure your proposal narrative describes how you will *explicitly* target the groups you hope to serve. Think about the groups in your community who have historically been excluded. While this could certainly be women/girls, or rural populations writ large, think about how indigenous, black, immigrant, neurodiverse and other audiences have been excluded in your own venue, and ways to invite them in. Again, your work should target a *new audience* within your library system, or *increase participation* by an underserved/underrepresented group.

Q: The application says we should be partnering with STEM/STEAM organizations. Can you provide some examples of the types of organizations you're looking for?

A: These organizations should be providing content support or programs for your audience (but don't necessarily help you draw in a new audience). Examples may include the robotics club at your local high school, 4H clubs, industry contacts, local museums, or citizen science group. More important than the type of organization is their community involvement, and their ability to help you reach the audiences described above. Think beyond your current partners if necessary to identify potential new collaborations.

Q: The application also mentions community organizations that do not necessarily focus on STEAM. Are we allowed to partner with schools?

A: Absolutely! The intent of community partners is to reach deeper into the community to target underserved populations, increase reach, and identify populations not currently benefiting from library services. Schools, churches, recreation centers and places in the community where people gather are fantastic partners to increase reach. Also consider culturally-focused groups, if that's appropriate to your target audience.

Programming Requirements

Q: The application says we must complete a total of four programs. What if we do more? How do we know if a specific type of program "counts"?

A: The 4-program requirement is based on realistic work performed in past library exhibit programs. Your library knows best what types of programs can fulfil these requirements. For example, you may choose to do a story-time program or to do an outdoors biology experiment. What is most important to the project team is that a variety of audiences are impacted by programming. If you do more than four programs, we'd appreciate it if you report on each one, so we can keep track of audience engagement across the larger program.

Q: When must the four programs occur?

A: These may occur anytime during the project period, which will be stated in your contract (approximately 6 months).

Display and Reporting Requirements

Q: The application mentions a "Whale Tail" that is 25' x 10'. What if we don't have space for this?

A: You do not need to be able to permanently display the tail. If you have space to put it out for storytime, in the parking lot during outdoor programs, or at an outreach program at a partner institution, you are still eligible. While we do not dictate the number of times you need to use the tail, since it is a costly component of the project, we'd ask that it is at least displayed during each of your required programs.

Q: I work at our Central Library and wish to apply on behalf of one of our smaller libraries. Is this okay?

A: Do not apply to host the project if you plan on having another branch host. The host venue must submit the application and be on board with the project.

Q: What reporting requirements do we have?

A: A final report will be required within 60 days of program completion. This report will ask you to describe programs hosted, provide pictures (with photo releases), and provide any numerical or demographic information available about program and exhibition attendance. A draft of the final report will be available prior to the program start.