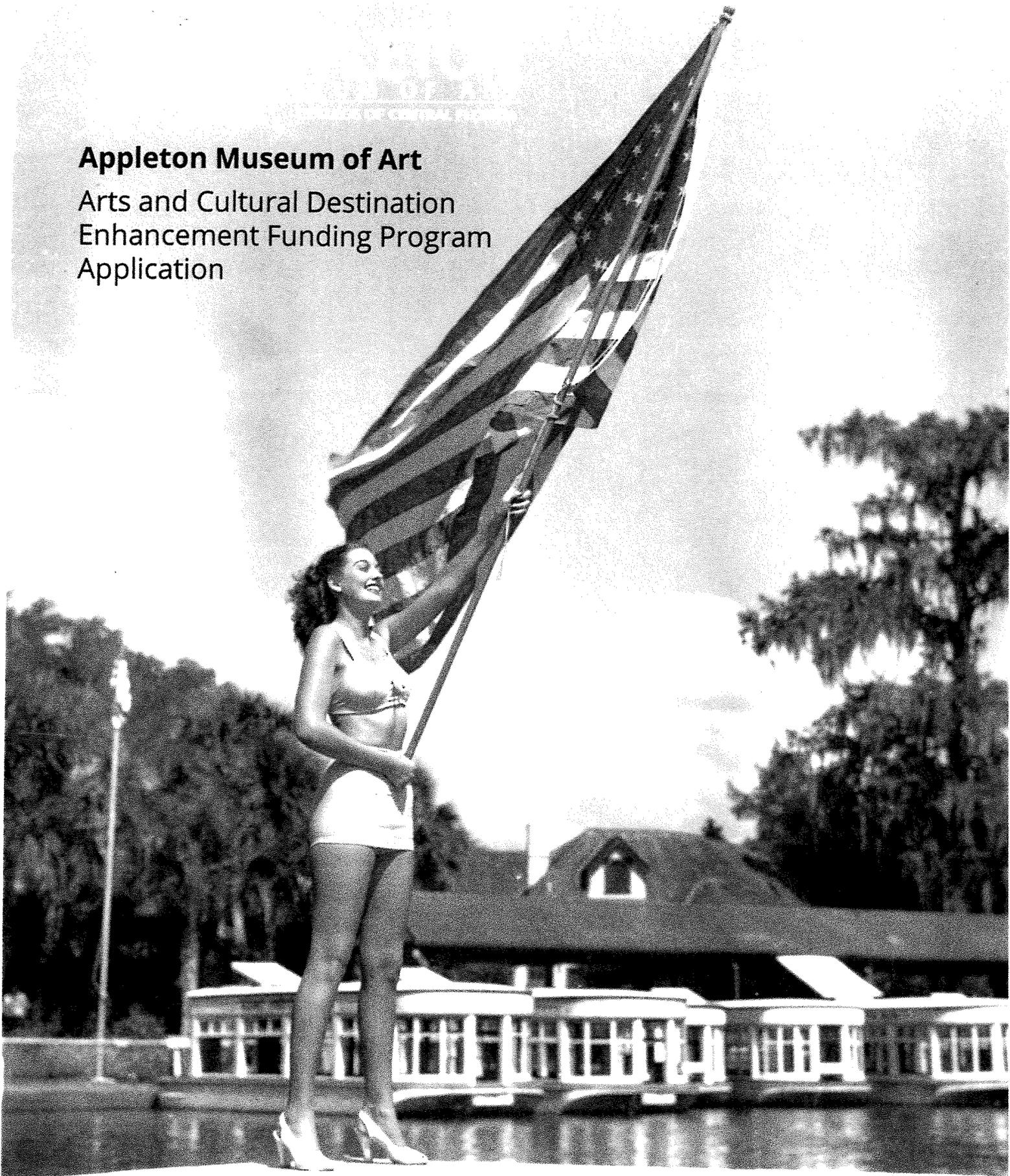


STATE OF FLORIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

**Appleton Museum of Art**  
Arts and Cultural Destination  
Enhancement Funding Program  
Application



**"My Country, 'Tis of Thee:  
Celebrating American Art and Design"**

**Applicant: Appleton Museum of Art, College of Central Florida Foundation**

**SECTION I. Program Event Summary, Organizational Information and Program Management**

**a. Program Event Summary**

***My Country, 'Tis of Thee: Celebrating American Art and Design***  
**March 13-September 13, 2026**

As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary, “My Country, 'Tis of Thee” celebrates more than three centuries of American art and design, honoring the enduring spirit of creativity and national pride. Drawn from the Appleton’s exceptional permanent collection, the exhibition highlights the diversity of American expression across time periods, subjects, media, and functions.

It also explores the pivotal role that Florida — and its spectacular natural landscapes, including those of Marion County — have played as sources of inspiration for artists. Interwoven throughout the galleries are historical artifacts from north central Florida that remind visitors of the region’s shared heritage and its place within the broader American story.

**b. Mission Statement**

The Appleton Museum of Art brings art and people together to inspire, challenge and engage present and future generations through our wide range of collections, exhibitions, programs, and educational opportunities.

**c. Economic Impact**

As the only art museum serving the tri-county region of Marion, Citrus, and Levy counties, the Appleton plays a vital role in both cultural enrichment and economic development through tourism, job creation, and education.

The museum welcomes approx. 60,000 onsite visitors annually, many of whom travel from outside the region and contribute to the local economy through spending on dining, lodging, and retail. According to the Ocala/Marion County Visitors & Convention Bureau, 4% of recent visitors were international and 56% were from outside Marion County.

The Appleton employs 11 full- and 25 part-time staff, with an annual payroll of \$1.27 million, and contracts with teaching artists, academic professionals, and local vendors. Exhibitions, classes, and events create steady work for caterers, printers, photographers, and others in the creative and business service sectors.

The Appleton participated in the Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6) study, led by the City of Ocala. The findings showed that Marion County’s arts and culture sector generates \$53.2 million annually — \$15.9 million from organizational spending and \$37.3 million from

audience expenditures. The study underscored the impact of cultural tourism: 21.3% of attendees were nonlocal visitors who spent an average of \$49.50 per person. Nearly 70% cited the cultural event or venue as their primary reason for visiting.

The museum strengthens the local business community through strategic partnerships. Businesses offer exclusive discounts to Appleton members, receiving free promotion through the museum’s print materials, website, social media, and emails. These offers drive awareness and traffic to local businesses while enhancing membership value. Notably, too, is the College of Central Florida’s partnership with Marion County through the newly opened Marion County Employee Health Center located on the Appleton Museum of Art campus. Being just steps away, all Marion County employees will benefit from health and arts access with this amazing partnership.

Local food trucks are featured at the museum’s Free First Saturday events, drawing over 15,000 visitors annually from all over Florida. This partnership provides vendors with consistent exposure and sales opportunities, with additional marketing that actively encourages attendees to support participating Marion County small businesses.

**d. Financial Request**

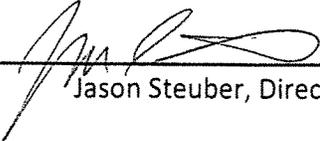
\$10,000

**e. Financial History – N/A**

**f. Advisory Council**

<b>Community Representatives</b>	<b>CF Representatives</b>
Albert Goodman	Dr. James Henningsen
Audrey Bell	Chris Knife
Beth Cannon	Dr. Jennifer Fryns
Bill Edgar, ex officio	Chuck Prince
Caron Reid	
David Rossiter	
Diane Carter	
Diane Gullett	
Kent Guinn, ex officio	
Linda Potter	
Melanie Gordon-Crawford	
Michele Martini	
Olivia Ortiz	
Phil Rosenberg	
Richard E. Schleicher	
Scott Canel, Esq.	
Te'Sha Jackson	

**g. Authorized Official Signature:**

Signature:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 11/19/2025  
Jason Steuber, Director

**SECTION II. Narrative Statement of Program/Event**

**About the Exhibition**

“My Country, 'Tis of Thee” is a major exhibition organized by the Appleton Museum of Art, College of Central Florida, on view March–September 2026 in the museum’s main galleries. The exhibition celebrates the approaching 250th anniversary of the United States through more than three centuries of American art and design, drawn from the Appleton’s exceptional permanent collection. Featuring paintings, decorative arts and regional artifacts, the exhibition explores how American creativity, innovation and identity have evolved across generations, while also highlighting Florida and Marion County’s pivotal role and natural beauty as sources of artistic inspiration.

“My Country, 'Tis of Thee” aligns with the mission of the Appleton Museum and the goals of the TDC by enhancing cultural tourism, fostering regional pride and positioning Marion County as a destination for arts, heritage and education during a milestone moment in American history.

**Dates, Schedule, and Venue**

The exhibition will be open to the public during the museum’s regular, year-round visitor hours: Tuesdays-Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sundays, noon-5 p.m. throughout the show dates (March 13-September 13, 2026). It will be on view in the Appleton’s main, rotating gallery on the first floor, the Edith-Marie Gallery.

**Related Programs and Activities**

Thursday, March 12, All-Members Celebration – all Appleton members are invited to celebrate the opening of “My Country, 'Tis of Thee.”

July 1-31, 2026, “Stars, Stripes and Art” – admission is free during the month of July 2026 in celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States.

Saturday, July 11, 1 p.m. – in partnership with Florida Humanities, join us on Free First Saturday for a talk (rescheduled from July 4), “Picturing Paradise: From John James Audubon to the Florida Highwaymen,” by Dr. Keri Watson. Free as part of Free First Saturday. Other special activities will include educational and public programming held in the auditorium, corresponding activity stations for all ages in the museum’s Artspace, and free guided tours for visitors, schools and tour groups.

## **Track Record**

A campus of the College of Central Florida, the Appleton Museum of Art is an AAM-accredited institution housing a collection of more than 24,000 artworks.

Since the public opening in December 1987, the museum has presented a world-class permanent collection that's unparalleled in our region, and in our state. The museum continues its commitment to artistic excellence and community engagement by presenting special exhibitions that highlight Florida artists, offer new perspectives on the permanent collection, and celebrate youth creativity. These exhibitions attract visitors from across the state and beyond, contributing to Marion County's cultural vitality and tourism economy.

For three decades, the museum has served as an advocate and partner to regional arts organizations and as a cultural anchor for the east end of the county. We actively support local businesses through patronage and reciprocal partnerships and remain dedicated to inspiring future generations of artists and art enthusiasts.

In 2026, the Appleton will turn its focus to American art and design as part of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." The project builds on the museum's long-standing success in presenting innovative, high-quality programs that connect art, history and community.

## **SECTION III. Tourism Generation/Marketing Plan.**

### **Event Timing & Tourism Appeal**

"My Country, 'Tis of Thee" will be on view at the Appleton Museum of Art from March–September 2026, spanning Florida's slower spring and summer tourism months to attract cultural tourists, families, and other travelers. Aligning with national celebrations of America's 250th anniversary, the exhibition offers visitors a compelling reason to travel to Marion County during the off-season. Its themes of American creativity and Florida's artistic legacy will appeal to audiences statewide and nationally, drawing visitors seeking meaningful, educational, and visually rich experiences.

Additionally, the Appleton has included an RFP for distribution to lodging industry partners (see application page following the detail budget).

### **Target Audience (as it pertains to this grant request)**

Cultural tourists, art enthusiasts, heritage travelers and retirees from Gainesville, The Villages, Orlando, Tampa Bay, and other Central/North Florida markets.

### **Out-of-County Marketing**

Purchase print and digital ads to promote the exhibition in regional publications such as Gainesville Sun, Tampa Bay Times, Tampa Bay Magazine, Orlando Sentinel, Artistry Magazine, and others.

Purchase print and digital billboard space in Gainesville and The Villages.

Secure editorial features and calendar listings in cultural tourism and lifestyle outlets statewide.

Collaborate with WUFT (Gainesville PBS/NPR) for underwriting spots highlighting the exhibition's national significance and family-friendly appeal.

Distribute press releases to media list covering statewide markets, and beyond.

### **Print and Direct Mail**

Produce a postcard campaign promoting "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," mailed via Every Door Direct Mail to select ZIP codes in Gainesville, The Villages, and other high-visitation areas.

### **Social Media and Video**

Create a short-form video series introducing key works and exhibition themes to run across social media and YouTube.

Boost posts during key travel months (March–August 2026) using tourism-related hashtags (#VisitFlorida, #ExploreOcala, #FloridaMuseums).

Leverage the Appleton's strong YouTube following — the largest among college art museums in Florida — to extend reach beyond Marion County.

### **Performance Measurement**

Success will be evaluated through:

- Increased attendance from out-of-county ZIP codes (tracked through visitor surveys and admission data).
- Social media engagement metrics and web traffic from target regions.
- Earned media placements and advertising impressions.

## **SECTION IV. Sustainability and Growth Potential.**

*Include detailed information outlining the event's/program's community support. Also, provide information outlining a plan to grow the event/program and subsequently, attract additional visitors in future years.*

Although "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" is a temporary exhibition, it is part of the Appleton's ongoing, year-round schedule of rotating special exhibitions that sustain visitor engagement and drive cultural tourism. As a department of the College of Central Florida, the museum receives annual budget allocations that support the curation, design and installation of exhibitions such as this one.

Funding support from Marion County will significantly enhance the Appleton's ability to promote "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" beyond Marion County, targeting regional and statewide audiences through strategic marketing campaigns and tourism partnerships. By increasing visibility across Central and North Florida, this investment will directly generate out-of-county visitation during the exhibition's run and highlight Marion County's art and historical legacies in the broader story of America.

During the run of the exhibition, the Appleton will collaborate with Arts in Health Ocala Metro on a special program that ties the exhibition to their "Art Isn't Extra" initiative, and celebrating National Arts & Health Day on July 26, 2026. This partnership unites several of Marion County's leading arts organizations to foster community engagement and highlight the region's rich cultural landscape.

**SECTION V. Proposal Budget for "My Country, 'Tis of Thee":**

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Incl. County Logo or Sponsor Credit Line</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Printing & Postage, Exhibition Postcard (EDDM to Out-of-County Zip Codes)	X	\$ 3,500	\$3,500
Advertising			\$25,000
Out-of-County Billboards (ClearChannel & Lamar)	X	\$13,000	
In & Out-of-County Print & Digital Ads	X	\$10,000	
Out-of-County Radio	X	\$2,500	
Exhibition Installation			\$18,125
Gallery Paint		\$7,125	
Framing		\$8,500	
Wall Vinyls	X	\$2,500	
Professional Photography		\$2,350	\$2,350
Programming & Events			\$7,350
Members Party (Food & Beverage)		\$5,000	
Ocala Symphony Orchestra Partner Activity Supplies		\$1,500	
Artspace Activity Station Supplies		\$500	
Guest Speaker Fee		\$350	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>			<b>\$56,325</b>

<b>Income (Specific to 6-Month Time Period of Exhibition)</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Museum Admissions	\$35,000
Appleton Store	\$38,000
<b>TOTAL ADMISSIONS &amp; STORE INCOME</b>	<b>\$73,000</b>

*Funds received from Marion County will be matched with museum funds from the income streams detailed in the income chart above.*



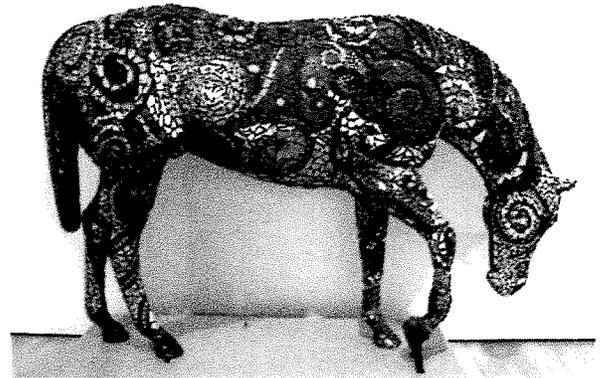
## Request for Proposal

1. Event Name: "My Country, 'Tis of Thee: Celebrating American Art and Design"
2. Organization: Appleton Museum of Art, College of Central Florida
3. Overall event dates: March 13-September 13, 2026
  - a. Check in date: Ongoing
  - b. Check out date: Ongoing
4. Total attendees (competitors, spectators, volunteers, officials, etc.):  
Estimated total attendance is 30,000.
5. Total number rooms needed (all nights included): Unknown
6. Total number of rooms needed per night? Unknown
7. Any special requests? Meeting Space, WiFi, Breakfast, Comp rooms, Catering, etc.? N/A

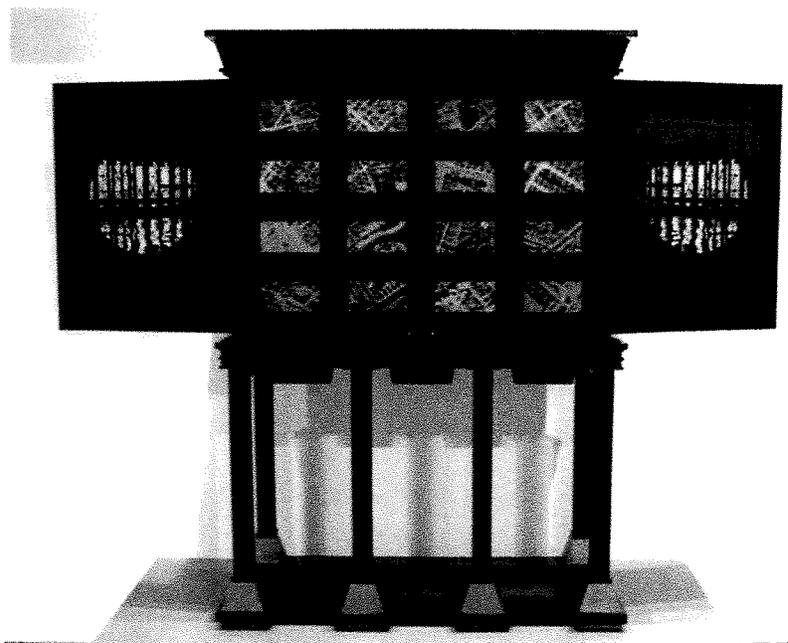
Appleton Museum of Art  
A Selection of Artworks from "My Country, 'Tis of Thee: Celebrating American Art and Design"



Bruce Mozert (American, 1916-2015)  
"Jackie Bingham posing with an American flag at  
Silver Springs," ca. 1949.



Brenda Flynn (American, b. 1955)  
"Journey," 2002  
Mosaic tile on fiberglass armature  
Gift of Laurie and David Jones



Chuck Sharbaugh (American)  
"Bay 82," 2006  
Furniture, solid wood/veneer  
Courtesy of the artist