

Tourism

The Aquarium of Niagara serves Western New York as the region's only aquarium within 250 miles in the United States. Its living collection and education programs serve the community in many forms including as a cultural destination, education center, venue for family activities and tourist attraction. Additionally, the Aquarium needs to regularly introduce innovative projects, such as Explorer's Reef, to generate return visits from previous guests and encourage first-time visitors to come to the Aquarium.

The Aquarium of Niagara sees this experience as one of the institution's most valued commodities. Visitors to Western New York have become increasingly less interested in goods and services, and instead seek out interactive experiences. This project will ensure continued success by staging an engaging first impression that embraces our guests in a personal and memorable experience, all while promoting our zoological mission. This project will result in exceptional visitor satisfaction and contribute to the Aquarium's master plan, which emphasizes consistent strategic growth through the progressive installation of dynamically themed galleries and interactive experiences. Important interpretative messaging will supplement the experience, as guests will learn how we care for all of the animals living at the Aquarium of Niagara and how everyday actions can protect them in the wild. The proposed project will bring awareness to the value of conserving essential coastal habitats and promote everyday actions to advocate for conservation of marine and aquatic species.

The Aquarium of Niagara currently sees over 300,000 visitors on an annual basis and is proudly supported by numerous tourism partners in Niagara Falls. Most substantially, the Aquarium is partnered with New York State Parks as an attraction within the Niagara Falls USA Discovery Pass. This critical partnership contributes substantially to the Aquarium's annual attendance. The successful completion of this project will continue to grow the Aquarium's annual attendance, serving the City of Niagara Falls as a destination for tourists and residents.

Explorer's Reef Project Description

The Aquarium of Niagara proposes the construction of three interactive touch pools at its 701 Whirlpool Street location.

The project, entitled Explorer's Reef, will be an interactive habitat directly adjacent to the main entrance of the Aquarium. Visitors will be guided through the experience as they dip their hands into a shallow tropical pool and discover the unique texture and movement of stingrays, sharks and a collection of marine invertebrates. During this hands-on experience, bamboo sharks and cownose rays will glide around the coastal-themed habitats, inviting visitors to make contact and explore smooth stingrays and leathery sharks. The exhibit will be surrounded by shallow edges and viewing windows to provide visitors a close encounter with these gentle and graceful animals. Explorer's Reef will also be home to a variety of other creatures including sea stars, anemones and horseshoe crabs which are one of the most ancient species on the planet.

Important interpretative messaging will supplement the experience, as guests will learn how we care for all of the animals living at the Aquarium of Niagara and how everyday actions can protect them in the wild. The exhibit will present each species in a way that highlights their importance in a healthy ocean ecosystem, and emphasizes the value of conserving essential coastal habitats such as mangroves and lagoons.

The Aquarium of Niagara sees this experience as one of the institution's most valued commodities. Visitors to Western New York have become increasingly less interested in goods and services, and instead seek out interactive experiences. This project will ensure continued success by staging an engaging first impression that embraces our guests in a personal and memorable experience, all while promoting our zoological mission. This project will result in exceptional visitor satisfaction and contribute to the Aquarium's master plan, which emphasizes consistent strategic growth through the progressive installation of dynamically themed galleries and interactive experiences.

The Aquarium of Niagara's animal collection includes a diverse range of over 120 species, including sharks, invertebrates, penguins, reptiles and amphibians. Most notably, the Aquarium is also home to 11 marine mammals, of which 8 are rescued and have been deemed non-releasable. The Explorer's Reef exhibit will offer a hands-on interactive encounter as part of the experience included with general admission. It is anticipated that this will add to the overall time that visitors spend at the Aquarium.

The proposed project will bring awareness to the value of conserving essential coastal habitats and promote everyday actions to advocate for conservation of marine and aquatic species. Additionally, the Aquarium needs to regularly introduce innovative projects, such as Explorer's Reef, to generate return visits from previous guests and encourage first-time visitors to come to the Aquarium. The organization sees this

development as a critical milestone in capturing the community's attention with its spirited new direction towards becoming a cultural anchor for the City of Niagara Falls, and an esteemed community asset for all of Western New York.

The Aquarium of Niagara serves Western New York as the region's only aquarium within 250 miles in the United States. It's living collection and education programs serve the community in many forms including as a cultural destination, education center, venue for family activities and tourist attraction.

As demonstrated by the success of many recent projects, exhibits and developments at the institution have been directly correlated to an increase in visitation to the Aquarium and surrounding area. Consequently, there has been an observed increase in visitor dwell time, converting to an extended stay on the American side of Niagara Falls. Through this growth, neighboring venues and hospitality partners including restaurants and merchants are exposed to increased consumer traffic. The project also provides additional job opportunities at the Aquarium itself; invests in an otherwise economically disadvantaged neighborhood; includes private sector support; and will position Niagara Falls USA as a leader in environmental conservation, further enhancing the region's attractiveness to tourists, scientists, and educators.

Scope of Work and Community Impact

The Aquarium of Niagara is an icon of downtown Niagara Falls, but also a nationally recognized marine conservation institution. As an independent, not-for-profit organization committed to the conservation of our oceans and waterways, the Aquarium brings the local community together, educating and reminding us of the vital importance of protecting our Great Lakes and beyond. Residents of Western New York have always been strong supporters of the Aquarium, and many have committed years of service acting as volunteers, board members, and patrons to our facility. The Aquarium of Niagara provides a destination to share an experience of exploring the underwater world across families, students and individuals living in our community. Whether using an experience at the Aquarium to teach a child about exotic animals on the other side of the world or inspiring the public to protect the natural places that matter most, each visit to the Aquarium has a positive impact on the community in a variety of ways. The Aquarium takes great pride in the role we continue to play in making our community ever-better.

Application for Tourism Promotion Funding

This application must be completed three (3) months prior to the date of the event. Applications must be submitted to the Office of the Niagara Falls City Clerk. It can be mailed to:

Niagara Falls City Clerk, City Hall, 745 Main Street, Niagara Falls, New York, 14302 -or- hand delivered to the **Office of the City Clerk** at the above address, Room 114.

Project Title: **Explorer's Reef: Interactive Touch Pool**

Project Dates: Beginning 6/1/19 Ending 6/30/19

Where will the project or event take place? **Aquarium of Niagara**

701 Whirlpool Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14301

Contact Person: **Gary Siddall, Executive Director**

Email: **gsiddall@aquariumofniagara.org**

Phone: **716-286-9380**

Organization: **Niagara Aquarium Foundation**

Type of Entity (check all that apply):

For Profit ____ Not-for-Profit **X** Municipal ____

If 501c3, enter tax ID# here **16-1448764**

Is the entity both registered with the State of New York and authorized to do business in the State of New York? **Yes**

Has the Corporate entity authorized the applicant to apply for these funds and is it willing to accept accountability for their use? Yes

Address: **701 Whirlpool Street**

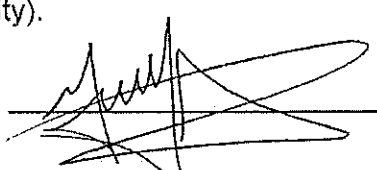
City: **Niagara Falls**

State: **New York**

Zip Code: **14301**

Project Sponsor: **N/A**

(Person representing agency or organization to sign Memorandum of Understanding with the City).

Signature: 

Amount requested: **\$166,000** Other funding sources: **\$1,199,000**

Total project budget: **\$1,365,000**

Please list all amounts received from the City of Niagara Falls, NY for each of the past five (5) years and provide a details accounting of all monies expended (if there is none, please state "NONE"). Attach additional sheets if needed.

\$175,000 Humboldt Penguin Exhibit - Casino Revenues (\$25,000 for design, architect, engineering and building permits, \$150,000 for hard construction costs.

Sources of Funds	Status	Amount
Niagara County Tourism Target Zone Funding	Confirmed	\$ 361,147.00
NYS Empire State Development (CFA)	Confirmed	\$ 341,000.00
Private Foundation	Confirmed	\$ 250,000.00
Aquarium of Niagara Equity	Confirmed	\$ 235,000.00
John R. Oishei Foundation	Confirmed	\$ 200,000.00
First Niagara Foundation	Confirmed	\$ 150,000.00
East Hill Foundation	Confirmed	\$ 100,000.00
Corporate Donations	Confirmed	\$ 25,000.00
Aquarium of Niagara Board	Confirmed	\$ 13,000.00
Total Sources of Funds		\$ 1,675,147.00

Project Guidelines and Metrics

The Aquarium will measure success of the project using both quantitative and qualitative assessments. Changes, trends and shifts in general admission provide immediate and insightful measures of project awareness and community participation. Monthly reconciliation of attendance figures against projections and performance over year prior provide statistics on the performance of the project. With respect to qualitative measures of evaluation, the Aquarium of Niagara evaluates all programming on an ongoing basis to assess its impact through online surveys, focus groups, direct and indirect questioning techniques, and feedback solicited through social media. After completion, the Aquarium projects to observe an increase in favorable responses on guest feedback surveys that track visitor satisfaction, quality and impact.

Advertising

The Aquarium of Niagara spends over \$100,000 annually in advertising its programs, exhibits and activities to drive visitation. Marketing campaigns are typically comprised of outdoor advertising (billboards, benches, etc.), digital advertising, in-room hotel advertising, and substantial social media component campaigns.

The Aquarium of Niagara is accessible to the online community through:

Website: www.aquariumofniagara.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/aquariumofniagara

Twitter: @AQNiagara

AQUARIUM OF NIAGARA
Explorer's Reef Touch Pool Budget



Project Expenses	Total
Steel Framing and Decking	\$ 200,000.00
Metals	\$ 13,500.00
Demolition, Concreate and Patching	\$ 24,000.00
Structural and Interior Framing	\$ 250,000.00
Plumbing	\$ 40,000.00
Electrical	\$ 90,000.00
Data/IT and Fire	\$ 30,000.00
HVAC Systems	\$ 42,000.00
Roofing	\$ 35,000.00
Doors and Windows	\$ 50,000.00
Finshes	\$ 115,000.00
Animal Husbandry and Life Support	\$ 208,000.00
Interactive Technology	\$ 105,000.00
Architectural/Engineering/Soft Costs/Permits	\$ 100,000.00
Contingency	\$ 62,500.00
Grand Total Construction Cost	\$ 1,365,000.00

Committed Project Funds	Status	Total
City of Niagara Falls Tourism Funds	Pending	\$ 166,000.00
Aquarium of Niagara Board	Confirmed	\$ 13,000.00
Aquarium of Niagara Equity	Confirmed	\$ 190,000.00
John R. Oishei Foundation	Confirmed	\$ 200,000.00
NYS Empire State Development (CFA)	Confirmed	\$ 273,000.00
Niagara County Tourism Target Zone Funding	Confirmed	\$ 273,000.00
Private Foundation Contribution	Confirmed	\$ 250,000.00
Grand Total Project Funds		\$ 1,365,000.00

