In December 2014, the museum received a $425,000 challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. This was the single-largest grant given to a museum in California in the 2014 grant cycle. There is a catch to the NEH grant; it requires a 1-to-3 match. NEH is an independent federal agency created in 1965. NEH has a mission to serve and strengthen our republic by promoting excellence in the humanities and ensuring the access of history to all Americans. They work to build a thriving landscape of cultural icons and grants for top-rated proposals examined by panels of independent, external reviewers. NEH grants typically go to cultural institutions, such as museums, universities, libraries, colleges, universities, public television and radio stations. Within the Imperial Valley, we have a rich culture and history that is unique to our region.

At the museum, we worked hard for two years to develop a great grant application and to develop a successful fundraising track record that we felt would be necessary to get a grant award from NEH. We were excited to be awarded the grant, but it requires a lot of work, that is why it is called a “challenge” grant. Each year the museum will need to raise $150,000 in non-federal dollars, which will be matched by $450,000 federal dollars from NEH. At the end of the four-year grant, we will have built a million-dollar endowment.

Our first year ended on July 31, 2015. A combination of clean energy mitigation funds, private donations and our members, we made our match this year. On Aug. 19 we endowed $259,311 in an account with First Foundation Bank.

Thanks to our membership, we made our match this year. On Aug. 19 we endowed $259,311 in an account with First Foundation Bank.

_jobs, jobs, jobs_

The NEH Endowment Challenge grant will require large donations from clean energy companies if we are going to successfully fund these two permanent positions. That is no small task and will require a commitment from our members over the next four years.

Since January we have had 90 individuals give matching funds to this endowment grant. Nearly one-third of our members gave donations to the endowment above and beyond their regular membership fees and other gifts. This is a statistic that any museum would be proud of, but it is especially impressive in our small community.

What follows is more information is what happened next. At the beginning of last July, we were $2,000 short of making our annual goal of $150,000. Over the month we sent out emails and made phone calls to our members. We are not in a big market, and we do not have members with deep pockets. We were overwhelmed with the response. Eighteen members stepped up to the challenge and sent in donations to see that we met our full match. This included donations of $5,000, $2,000 and $1,000.

On the last day of the month we got the call at the museum, and one of our members gave $10,000. To ensure we met our goal — the single largest donation we have ever received from a member. Thanks to our members, we are moving forward and on the path to maintaining the exciting programs and activities that we have built over the last four years. Thank you.

Above: Anne Morgan leads a fourth-grade field trip to the museum.