



## **National Leadership Grants**

# **FY2012 NLG Tier 2 Reviewer Handbook**

**For information, contact:**

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## NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR MUSEUMS TIER 2 REVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS

### Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a National Leadership Grant tier 2 reviewer!

These instructions will guide you through the review process and are intended to help ensure fair and candid consideration of all applications. Please use them in conjunction with this year's *National Leadership Grants Guidelines*, available online at: <http://www.ims.gov/applicants/grants/nationalLeadership.shtm>.

Even if you are an experienced IMLS reviewer, you will need to refresh your memory and note any changes to the NLG program. Please contact IMLS staff (listed at the end of this document) if you have questions after reading the instructions.

### National Leadership Grant Summary and Goals

National Leadership Grants support projects that address challenges faced by the museum, library, and/or archive fields and that have the potential to advance practice in those fields. Successful proposals will seek **innovative** responses to the challenge(s) identified in the proposals, and will have **national impact**.

The National Leadership Grant program accepts applications under four main categories:

- *Advancing Digital Resources*—Support the creation, use, presentation, and preservation of significant digital resources as well as the development of tools to enhance access, use, and management of digital assets.
- *Research*—Support research that investigates key questions that are important to museum, library, and archival practice.
- *Demonstration*—Support projects that produce a replicable model or practice that is usable, adaptable, or scalable by other institutions for improving services and performance.
- *Library Museum Collaboration Grants*— Support collaborative projects (between museums and/or libraries and other community organizations) that address the educational, economic, cultural, or social needs of a community. In 2012, a funding priority will be projects that promote early learning.

Applicants may choose to submit a Project Grant, Planning Grant, or National Forum Grant proposal in any of the above categories.

- *Project Grants* support fully developed projects for which needs assessments, partnership development, feasibility analyses, prototyping, and other planning activities have been completed.  
\$50,000 - \$1,000,000

- *Planning Grants* allow project teams to perform preliminary planning activities that could lead to a subsequent full project, such as needs and feasibility analyses, solidifying partnerships, developing project work plans, or developing prototypes or proofs of concept. Applications for Planning Grants must include at least one formal partner in addition to the lead applicant.  
Up to \$50,000
- *National Forum Grants* provide the opportunity to convene qualified groups of experts and key stakeholders to consider issues or challenges that are important to libraries, museums, and/or archives across the nation. Grant-supported meetings are expected to produce widely disseminated reports with expert recommendations for action or research that address a key challenge identified in the proposal. The expert recommendations resulting from these meetings are intended to guide future proposals to the National Leadership Grant program.  
Up to \$100,000

### Accessing Review Materials

The IMLS Applications Online System is a file sharing site from which you will download proposals and other documents you need to perform your work.

All instructions for logging in and downloading all of your assigned proposals and other documentation can be found in **Appendix 1** of this document. Please note that this is not a system for you to evaluate the proposals online, this is simply a system designed for delivering the necessary documents to you.

Materials available for download include:

- A table listing grant applications to be reviewed by the tier 2 reviewers with columns indicating who will read each proposal and who will serve as discussion leader (indicated by blue shading). **You should refer to this table before printing additional materials** (pdf)
- All grant applications to be reviewed by the tier 2 reviewers along with the tier 1 reviewer comments and final scores (pdf)
- Blank Overview Panel Comment Template (Word doc)
- Conflict of Interest Statement for you to sign and bring with you to the panel meeting (pdf)

### Conflict of Interest

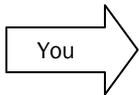
Please review the list of proposals and the Conflict of Interest Statement and contact us immediately if you believe you may have a conflict of interest on any proposal.

## Confidentiality

We remind you to protect the confidentiality of the review process by not revealing the names of any applicants, project activities, or your fellow reviewers and by not consulting with other panelists about any of the proposals prior to the meeting.

## The Complete NLG Review Process

1. Applicants submit their grant applications to IMLS, and program staff checks them for eligibility and completeness.
2. Program staff selects tier 1 reviewers and match grant applications to those reviewers with appropriate expertise.
3. Tier 1 reviewers assess the applications and complete evaluation online based on the following criteria:
  - Statement of need
  - Impact
  - Project design
  - Project resources: personnel, time, budget
  - Communications plan (*not required for planning grants*)
  - Sustainability (*not required for planning grants, national forum grants, or any application in the research category*)
4. Staff analyzes scores and comments of tier 1 reviewers, conduct conference calls of reviewers where more discussion is necessary, and prepare recommendations of proposals to move to tier 2 review.
5. Tier 2 reviewers consider high scoring proposals and meet at IMLS to discuss proposals. These discussions help program staff in formulating funding recommendations.
6. Program staff conducts detailed budget checks.
7. IMLS Director makes final funding decisions.
8. Program staff notifies all applicants of their funding status.
9. Program staff provides tier 1 and tier 2 comments to all applicants regardless of funding status.



## Tier 2 Review Process

1. Read all instructions.
2. Review the 2012 NLG Guidelines to familiarize yourself with the goals of the program, the four categories of funding (Demonstration, Advancing Digital Resources, Research, and Library-Museum Collaboration), and levels of funding (Full Project Grants, Planning Grants, and National Forum Grants) Program guidelines are available online at:  
<http://www.imls.gov/applicants/grants/nationalLeadership.shtm>.

3. Identify which proposals you are responsible for reading and reviewing. Note that each proposal will be read by three tier 2 reviewers.
4. Read through each assigned proposal along with the corresponding tier 1 comments (all applications will have three tier 1 reviews saved as a single pdf).
5. Complete a Tier 2 Comment Template for each application you have been assigned to review. Please do this with the electronic Word document on the file sharing site so that you can send them back to us via email as separate Word documents. Base your comments on the Tier 2 Review Criteria chart in Appendix 2 of this document.
6. Assign a score:
  - *5-Excellent*: outstanding project as proposed and fulfills the goals of the program.
  - *4-Very Good*: not as strong as an excellent but demonstrates strong project components and will likely be successful even though it might be strengthened a bit in certain aspects.
  - *3-Good*: Adequate proposal – the project will likely be successful but the proposal falls short in a number of ways and could be strengthened.
  - *2-Some Merit*: although the proposal has merit, it is not likely to be successful; project would require major reworking and should not be recommended for funding; might be a project that is worthy of resubmission with improvements.
  - *1-Do Not Fund*: the proposal would not be successful and is not recommended for resubmission in this form.
7. Please note that we are not asking for a detailed technical or budgetary review. Instead, we are seeking your advice on overall project merit, impact, and innovation. The preliminary panelists have completed a detailed technical and budgetary review, and their comments have been provided for your reference as you shape your comments. Ultimately, your own opinions may reinforce or stand in opposition to their analysis.
8. When you are writing your responses, please keep in mind these characteristics of good comments:
  - Presented in a constructive manner
  - Concise, specific, easy to read and understand
  - Specific to the individual applicant
  - Correspond to the score given
  - Acknowledge the resources of the institution

- Reflect the application’s strengths and identifies areas for improvement
  - Directed to applicants for their use in potential resubmission
9. On your table of proposal assignments, cells shaded blue indicate who will serve as discussion leader for each proposal. This involves providing a short verbal summary of the proposal for your fellow panelists preceding your review. Your summary helps non-readers understand the discussion and provides a good starting point for the other two readers. As you are completing your evaluation, please prepare some notes for the applications for which you have been assigned the role of discussion leader.
10. Email your individual Overview Panel Comment Forms as individual Word documents to Tim Carrigan [tcarrigan@imls.gov](mailto:tcarrigan@imls.gov) by **Sunday, July 15**. Please use the following naming convention for your word documents: “IMLS Log Number – Applicant Name\_Your Last Name;” for example “LG-24-12-0629 – University of Delaware\_Smith.”

### Suggested Review Schedule

Experienced reviewers estimate that it takes two to three hours to evaluate one application. If you are a first time NLG reviewer, you may need more time. Here is a sample four-week review schedule:

- Week 1:
  - Access the IMLS Applications Online System and download your proposals and other documents. Check materials for completeness and contact Tim or Helen with any problems
  - Read and sign the Conflict of Interest Statement to bring to the meeting. If you feel you may have a conflict with any of the proposals assigned to you, contact Helen or Tim immediately.
  - Review 2012 NLG Guidelines and this instruction document
  - Do an initial read of your assigned proposals.
- Week 2 - 3:
  - Do a second read of your assigned proposals and compose your comments.
- Week 4:
  - Assign each proposal a rating (1-5).
  - Finalize comments and send them to Tim Carrigan at [tcarrigan@imls.gov](mailto:tcarrigan@imls.gov). Please note that each review should be a separate Word document using the naming convention discussed previously.
  - Prepare what you need to bring to the meeting. Note that we will have laptops for each of you with access to all the applications, preliminary

panel reviews, and your comments, which you will have the opportunity to edit on site.

### **At the Tier 2 Reviewer Meeting**

At the reviewer meeting we will take time to present and discuss each proposal. We will balance the need to have full and constructive conversations about each proposal with our need to finish our work in one day.

We will break for lunch at which point you can go to a variety of local eateries. If time is tight, we may ask that you bring your lunch back to the panel room so that we can continue our work.

After each application discussion, you will have the opportunity to edit your comment sheet and change your score. We will print them out for you to sign at the end of the day.

At some point during the panel, we will pause for an issues discussion. This is an opportunity to provide feedback on the grant review process and guidelines. We also hope to hear whether you think the National Leadership Grant program and these proposals are collectively meeting the needs of the field.

We look forward to seeing you here in Washington, DC on July 17<sup>th</sup>. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time during the process with any question or concern.

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## APPENDIX 2

### NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS Tier 2 Review Criteria

Your role as a reviewer is to evaluate how well proposals meet required characteristics for National Leadership Grants. You will provide comments for each of the three criteria below, but you will provide only ONE overall rating for each application. Consider the entire proposal, including the narrative and supporting documentation, as you evaluate each application's strengths and weaknesses in the following areas.

|  |
|--|
| <b>1. Does the project meet the goals of the National Leadership Grant Program?</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Addresses a key need or challenge that faces libraries, archives, and/or museums</li><li>• Has the potential to elevate museum, library and/or archival practice</li><li>• Has the potential for national impact and addresses key needs and challenges that face museums, libraries, and/or archives</li><li>• Demonstrates thorough understanding of current issues and practices in the project's focus area.</li><li>• Proposes innovation that is widely adoptable or adaptable.</li><li>• Includes carefully chosen partners, as appropriate/if applicable (Collaborative planning grants require partners).</li></ul> |
| <b>2. Is the project poised for successful implementation?</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explains how the project will address the identified problem or need.</li><li>• Articulates clear goals and objectives and an efficient, effective, and reasonable approach to accomplishing them.</li><li>• Presents a cost-efficient, complete, accurate and reasonable budget.</li><li>• Demonstrates that project personnel have appropriate experience, expertise, and time to accomplish project goals and activities.</li></ul>   |
| <b>3. How well does the proposal address evaluation and dissemination?</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides evidence that the project evaluation will provide reliable information on which to judge the project's success</li><li>• Plans to communicate project results and disseminate project deliverables effectively with targeted audiences</li></ul>  |
| <b>4. Additional Comments or Suggestions</b>   |
| You may use the Additional Comments box to share your overall impression of the application and any general comments that do not fall into one of the above categories.  |

## Appendix II

### Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), you may receive for review a grant application that could present a conflict of interest. Such a conflict could arise if you are involved with the applicant institution, or in the project described in the application, as a paid consultant or through other financial involvement. The same restrictions apply if your spouse or minor child is involved with the applicant institution or if the application is presented on behalf of an institution with which you, your spouse, or minor child is negotiating for future employment.

A present financial interest is not the only basis for conflict of interest. Through prior association as an employee or officer, you may have gained knowledge of the applicant that would preclude objective review of its application. Past employment (generally more than five years) does not by itself disqualify a reviewer so long as the circumstances of your association permit you to perform an objective review of the application. If you believe you may have a conflict of interest with any application assigned to you for review, please notify us immediately.

You may still serve as a reviewer even if your institution is an applicant in this grant cycle or you were involved in an application submitted in this grant cycle, as long as you do not review any application submitted by your own institution or any application in which you were involved. However, if you believe that these or any other existing circumstances may compromise your objectivity as a reviewer, please notify us immediately.

If an application presents no conflict of interest at the time you review it, a conflict of interest may still develop later on. Once you have reviewed an application, you should never represent the applicant in dealings with IMLS or another Federal agency concerning the application, or any grant that may result from it.

It is not appropriate, for your purposes or for the purposes of the institutions or organizations you represent, for you to make specific use of confidential information derived from individual applications that you read while you were serving as an IMLS reviewer. In addition, pending applications are confidential. Accordingly, you must obtain approval from IMLS before sharing any proposal information with anyone, whether for the purpose of obtaining expert advice on technical aspects of an application or for any reason.

If you have any questions regarding conflict of interest, either in relation to a specific application or in general, please contact Helen Wechsler, Senior Program Officer, at [hwechsler@imls.gov](mailto:hwechsler@imls.gov) or (202) 653-4779.