

FY 2024 NLG-L and LB21 Applicant Webinar

0:00

Hello, my name is Sheena Afoakwa and I'm a Program Specialist in the Office of Library Services at IMLS.

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Today we will briefly go over IMLS strategic priorities and provide an overview of the NLG and LB21 grant programs. We will also review eligibility criteria, the project types, take you through the application process, and provide you with some tips to help make your application complete and competitive.

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IMLS is an independent grantmaking agency and the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums.

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IMLS helps ensure that all Americans have access to museum, library and Information Services. You can read our mission and vision on this slide and on our website at [imls.gov](https://www.imls.gov).

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The IMLS Strategic Plan lays out several goals for the agency's work.

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In our first strategic goal, IMLS supports learning opportunities for people of all ages through museums and libraries, as well as the training and professional development of the museum and library workforce.

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In our second strategic goal, IMLS strengthens community collaboration and inclusive engagement across diverse audiences. In our third strategic goal, IMLS makes strategic investments that support collections care and management. IMLS also seeks to promote access to museum and library collections. You can find the strategic plan and more information on our website - [imls.gov](https://www.imls.gov).

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Today we'll be talking about two of our grant programs, both of which have a deadline of September 20th, 2023.

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The first is our National Leadership Grants for Libraries program, otherwise known as NLG. This grant program supports projects of national impact that address critical needs of the library and archives fields and have the potential to advance practice in these professions to strengthen library and archival services for the American public.

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Projects are expected to propose far reaching impact, address a current issue facing libraries and archives, incorporate collaborations, and show relevant expertise about the topic at hand. It is

particularly important to note the importance of 'far-reaching impact' in a National Leadership Grant application.

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Applications cannot only benefit a single individual or a single library or archive.

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Competitive proposals show the potential for 'far-reaching impact' across institutions.

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Note that we also do not accept applications that are strictly for digitization, and we cannot accept applications for construction.

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Applications to IMLS should advance knowledge and understanding, and ensure that the federal investment made generates benefits to society. Specifically, the goals for this program are to generate projects of national impact that build the workforce and institutional capacity for managing the national information infrastructure and serving the information and educational needs of the public.

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Libraries and archives to lead and contribute to efforts that improve community well-being and strengthen civic engagement. Improve the ability of libraries and archives to provide broad access to and use of information and collections, with emphasis on collaboration to avoid duplication and maximize reach.

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Strengthen the ability of libraries to provide services to affected communities in the event of an emergency or disaster. Strengthen the ability of libraries, archives, and museums to work collaboratively for the benefit of the communities they serve. Each applicant should align their proposed project with one of these 5 program goals and 1 or more of the associated objectives. Goal and objective choices should be identified clearly in the Narrative.

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The other program we will be discussing today is the Laura Bush 21st Century Library Program, or LB21 for short. This program is designed to support the development of a diverse workforce of librarians and archivists in order to meet the informational needs of their communities. Like NLG, projects are expected to propose 'far-reaching impact', address a current issue facing libraries and archives, include collaborative elements, show relevant expertise

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about the topic at hand, and broaden participation in the library and archives profession through the recruitment, education, and retention of a diverse workforce. Again, like NLG, it is important to note the 'far-reaching impact' in an LB21 application. Generally speaking, applications cannot only benefit a single individual or a single library or archives. Competitive proposals show the potential 'far-reaching impact' across institutions. For both NLG

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and LB21, please keep in mind that September 20th will be the only deadline for submitting preliminary proposals in fiscal year 2023.

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Applications to IMLS should both advance knowledge and understanding, and ensure that the federal investment made generates benefits to society.

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Specifically, the goals for this program are to generate projects of 'far-reaching impact' that recruit, train, develop and retain a diverse library and archival workforce; develop faculty, library and archives leaders by increasing the institutional capacity of libraries, archives, and graduate programs related to library and information science; enhance the training and professional development of the library and archival workforce to meet the needs of their communities. Each applicant

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should align their proposed project with one of these 3 program goals and 1 or more of the associated objectives.

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Goal and objective choices should be identified clearly in the Narrative.

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Here we have provided some guidance for those of you who are unsure whether your project idea fits into NLG or LB21.

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If your project is primarily about education and training for informational professionals, either formal or informal education, you should probably apply to LB21. If you are a non-tenured, tenure track faculty member interested in research funding, you will want to look at the Early Career Research Development category in LB21. Otherwise, any other work of national significance to libraries, archives, and information science will likely fall under the NLG program.

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Please make sure to read through the Notice of Funding Opportunity carefully to ensure your project is aligned with the correct grant program and that you meet eligibility criteria. If you are unsure, please feel free to contact one of our program staff for guidance.

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On the IMLS website, we have landing pages for each of the two programs. If you're on this webinar, it's likely you've already visited one or both. These pages provide an overview of the programs, links to the full Notices of Funding Opportunity, or NOFOs, and also relevant webinar recordings.

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If you wish to refer to this applicant webinar later, that is where you will find it.

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In addition, on each page you can find a list of the relevant program staff you should contact with questions about the grant programs and the application process. If you are unsure who to contact,

please just reach out to one of us and we will make sure to get you connected to the program officer whose expertise best aligns with your project idea. We highly suggest you reach out to one of us in advance of the preliminary proposal deadline.

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Your organization is eligible to apply if it is: 1) a unit of state or local government or a 501c3 nonprofit organization, 2) located in one of the 50 states or territories, and 3) one of six types of organizations, which will list on the next slide. Please also note that the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant Program has additional eligibility restrictions for Early Career Research Development proposals.

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So you should pay attention to that in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

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In addition to the criteria on the previous slide, your organization is eligible to apply if you are one of these six types of organizations, including a library, archives, or parent organization; an academic or administrative unit, a digital library or archives; or a library or archival agency, consortium, association, or organization. If you have any questions about your eligibility, please reach out to someone on our program staff.

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You're not eligible to apply to these programs if you're a federally-operated institution, a for-profit institution, an individual, or a foreign country or organization.

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A federally-operated institution does not mean an institution that receives other federal grants. It means that if you are federal agency, for example, the Library of Congress or Smithsonian, we cannot fund you. If you are an ineligible institution, we encourage you to partner with an eligible institution. While you cannot be the lead applicant, you can apply through a partnership with an eligible institution and may be able to receive funding in that manner.

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More information about this is provided in the guidelines on our website, but the point here is that it is important to figure out early if you are eligible to apply for the program that is of interest to you.

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To ensure you will be able to submit your application, please ensure the following registrations are in place at your institution.

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An applicant organization must have a Unique Entity Identifier

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(UEI) number; a current and active System for Award Management (SAM) registration; and an active Grants.gov registration with an approved Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). We strongly recommend you check these registrations immediately to ensure that they are accurate, current, and active, as it can take a long time to update or renew them. Your institution must be registered with SAM.

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It's important to keep in mind that your SAM registration is good for only one year at a time and must be renewed annually.

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That's something you don't want to be doing right before the deadline. We recommend checking your status early on. If it's not your job to track your SAM registration, we recommend you contact the person at your organization whose job it is, so that you can make sure this is in place. You'll also need an account at Grants.gov, which is the portal through which you will submit your application. Allow at least 2 weeks for the registration process here, and even if you know you're registered,

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make sure you know who is authorized for your institution, and make sure they know their login information. In fact, if you don't absolutely know for sure that all these registrations are in place now, I'd recommend checking on it as soon as we get done today. Again, it's not something you want to be trying to accomplish anywhere close to the deadline.

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All applicants will also have to select a project type. These categories each have different limits regarding the period of performance of the grant, which you can see in this table.

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Planning grants are for preliminary project activities. Many people think about this as planning for a larger grant, but that's not a requirement. Planning activities may include conducting preliminary research, conducting an environmental scan, rapidly prototyping a new program or service, or working on creating partnerships to support larger future activities. Forum grants are for convening experts and stakeholders around an issue of national significance.

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This could be to support one large meeting or several meetings focused on a particular area to establish a shared agenda or understanding. Planning and forum grants must be for 1 to 2 years.

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Implementation grants and Applied Research grants support project implementation or development activities, as well as investigating key research questions in library and archival practice. These are limited to 1 to 3 years. The LB21 program also offers the Early Career Research Development category, which supports the research of an untenured, tenure-track library and information science faculty member.

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To give you a better sense of the scale, here are the maximum dollar amounts you may request, which are based on the project type you select. In these two programs, the minimum dollar request is \$50,000. There is flexibility within the funding levels, but you should keep in mind that we have limited funding and both programs are highly competitive. We fund very few million-dollar projects. There is a value proposition that comes into play - the higher the amount you are asking for,

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the more compelling your case must be for how your work will impact the entire field and represent a

significant return on investment. The Notice of Funding Opportunity also spells out these funding caps along with the corresponding cost-share requirements.

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Cost sharing is not considered in the review of applications, but is an eligibility criterion. Again, this is spelled out in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Generally, a 1-to-1 cost share is required for both programs, with a few exceptions. Applicants and the Applied Research and Early Career Research Development project types and those requesting less than \$249,999 are exempt from this requirement. Additionally,

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LB21 applicants are not required to cost share the funds budgeted for student support. Please remember that if a cost is unallowable for IMLS funds, it is also unallowable for cost share.

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Each application must include two forms that are generated within Grants.gov and a two-page preliminary proposal narrative, which includes a budget summary. No other documents will be accepted.

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Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov before midnight Eastern Time on September 20th, 2023. Please note that Grants.gov has adopted a "workspace" feature, which you may be required to use to submit your proposal. We recommend you give yourself ample time to familiarize yourself with the system. IMLS' internal system for receiving application from Grants.gov will only accept documents in the PDF format.

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Any applications that include a non-PDF document will be bounced back by our system and will not be considered submitted. We recommend ensuring all documents are in PDF format prior to submittal and SUBMIT EARLY. Do not wait until 11:00 PM on the night of the deadline to submit.

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After proposals are submitted through Grants.gov, IMLS staff screens them for completeness and eligibility. After that, proposals undergo peer review. After peer review, all applicants will receive reviewer comments and feedback. The most competitive applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal for further consideration.

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Applicants who are invited to submit full proposals will need to submit those by March 20th, 2024.

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The required components for full proposals are much more extensive and are also listed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. These applications are also submitted through Grants.gov and will similarly undergo a peer review process. Full proposal applicants will be provided reviewer comments and feedback, regardless of whether the project is selected for funding or not. The IMLS Director makes final funding decisions, which will be announced in late July 2024, pending availability of funds

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and at the discretion of the Director.

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For the final part of this webinar, we'll go over some tips for preparing a competitive application at this phase of the proposal process.

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You should think about the preliminary proposal narrative as a movie trailer, providing the highlights of what a full proposal would include. We recognize that this is a challenge fitting all of the information about your project into two pages, so you'll want to be as succinct and specific as possible. The Search Awarded Grants section of the IMLS website has the full and preliminary proposals associated with the LB21 and NLG projects that have been funded over the past few years, which can be helpful

18:03

to review as you start to work on your proposal. The preliminary proposal should follow the general sections of a full proposal narrative and include an Introduction, Project Justification, Project Work Plan, Optional Diversity Plan, Project Results/Impact, and Budget Summary.

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Some elements you will want to address in your preliminary proposal include clearly identifying the project director and any project partners. This can easily and quickly be done in the first sentences of the Introduction. For example, "institution X and institution Y will partner together to make A or accomplish B. They request \$Z dollars from IMLS".

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We recommend foregoing lengthy introductions and getting directly into the meat of what your project is all about in the first sentence or two. In your Project Justification, you will want to ground your project in current and relevant research and practice. You will want to give an outline of your proposed Work Plan - what will it look like, and how will it be accomplished? If it's a research proposal, you must articulate specific research questions and describe your data collection and analysis methods.

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Optionally, you should include a statement of how your project will strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field. You should make the relevance of your project to the program Goal clear, and also demonstrate the potential 'far-reaching impact' and projected outcomes of your work. Please note that a budget summary is required in all preliminary proposal narratives and must include the total anticipated costs of the project, including cost share (if required), and a breakdown of how funds would be allocated

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into different cost categories. Proposals that do not include this information will be rejected without review.

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IMLS Program Officers are available to discuss your project ideas with you and to look over a draft of

your preliminary proposal. If you'd like a Program Officer to take a look at a draft, please e-mail it to one of us by September 1st, 2023. Sending it even earlier is preferred, but September 1st will be the last day we are able to accept drafts. One of us will take a look at it and then we can schedule a call with you to discuss your draft and to answer any questions you may have.

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Please refer to the list at the end of this presentation to identify the Program Officer whose expertise best aligns with the subject matter in your proposal. While we can continue to answer questions you may have about the process, we can read and provide feedback on only one draft submission for each proposal.

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IMLS will instruct reviewers to consider the following review criteria when it evaluating Preliminary Proposals. Applicants will want to keep these in mind when writing the two-page proposal.

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Project Justification: How well does the proposal align with selected (NLG or LB21) goal and objectives? How well does it address current far-reaching and significant needs, challenges or opportunities in the field? Project Work Plan: What elements are in place and what elements are missing for successful execution of the proposed project? What recommendations do you have for improving the proposal? Diversity Plan (Optional): To what degree will the project strengthen the field's commitment to diversity,

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equity, and inclusion practices? Additionally, for LB21 proposals, to what degree will the project contribute to the recruitment, development, and/or retention of a diverse workforce of library and archive professionals? Project Results: Considering the topic, project type selection, amount of funds requested, and scope of potential impact, should the applicant be invited to submit a full proposal at this time? Why or why not?

22:09

The Notices of Funding Opportunity have specific guidance for applications in the Applied Research and Early Career Research Development categories. This slide lists some of the questions we ask you to consider; including thinking about the research questions, theoretical framing, research methods, and other aspects of your proposed project. Please note that the Applied Research and Early Career Research Development preliminary proposals MUST include research questions in the preliminary proposal narrative.

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As a summary, here are some things that you can do to ensure that you are submitting your most competitive proposal. The first you've already accomplished by viewing this webinar. Next, you want to choose the grant program and goal that best goes with your proposal idea. Some other tips are that you should read through the funded preliminary proposals from the last couple of years to get some ideas of what was successful and how they used the limited 2-pages of space. Articulate your project goals as quickly as possible

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in the preliminary proposal; include a budget paragraph; and be sure you are submitting all the completed and required documents in PDF format.

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We highly recommend having a colleague unfamiliar with your project read through your proposal prior to submission. We all get too close to our work, and this will ensure that the proposal you are submitting clearly communicates your project idea.

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Here are all the important dates you need to be aware of during this year's application cycle. Of most importance right now is the optional draft proposal and preliminary proposal deadlines. Again, please read through the Notices of Funding Opportunity carefully to ensure you are meeting eligibility criteria and have fulfilled all application requirements.

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As we mentioned already, program staff are available to assist with any questions you have about the proposal process. Here are some of the topical areas reflected in each program officers expertise and funding portfolio. This table is not intended to be comprehensive, but more so is intended to give you a sense of the best person to reach out to. That being said, we are a close group, so if you believe one of our colleagues has better expertise to discuss your project, we will ensure the person with the closest

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expertise gets back to you.

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And don't forget, program staff are available to discuss your project ideas with you and to look over a draft of your preliminary proposal. To take advantage of this opportunity, you must e-mail the draft of your proposal no later than end of day on Friday, September 1st. One draft submission is the limit for each proposal. You are more than welcome and even encouraged to e-mail or contact us well in advance of that deadline.

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Thank you for joining us for this presentation and we look forward to hearing from you soon.