



**Native American/Native Hawaiian  
Museum Services**

**FY2013 NANH  
Panel Reviewer Handbook**

## **Welcome to the NANH Program Review Process**

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services (NANH) panel reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your professional experience in museums or cultural centers, as well as your strong understanding of all aspects of their operations as they relate to tribal or Native Hawaiian communities. We have prepared this handbook to ensure the fair and candid review of all eligible applications and to provide you with the procedural and technical information you need. Please use it in tandem with the FY2013 Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services guidelines available at:

[http://www.ims.gov/applicants/2013\\_nanh\\_guidelines.aspx](http://www.ims.gov/applicants/2013_nanh_guidelines.aspx)

Even if you have reviewed for other IMLS programs, including NANH, in the past, you should read through this booklet since we have made some significant changes to the program this year.

## **Purpose and Scope of the NANH Program**

Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services (NANH) grants promote enhanced learning and innovation within museums and museum-related organizations, such as cultural centers organized by Native American tribes and organizations that primarily serve and represent Native Hawaiians. Grants provide opportunities to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge through strengthened museum services in the areas of programming, professional development, and enhancement of museum services.

For this program, applicants are not required to have a museum established in order to apply. While grants are intended to support activities in museums and museum-related organizations, such as cultural centers, the program also supports museum-like activities that are relevant to applicant tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations, such as public programming, collections support, and language preservation.

## **Application and Review Process**

1. Applicants submit their applications using Grants.gov.
2. IMLS receives the applications, and staff members check them for organizational eligibility and application completeness.
3. IMLS staff members identify a pool of available reviewers with appropriate expertise and assigns three reviewers to evaluate each application.
4. Reviewers receive online access to the applications, evaluate them, and complete their reviews online.
5. IMLS uses reviewers' comments and scores to rank the applications.

6. IMLS staff members review the budgets and past performance of the highest ranked applications.
7. IMLS staff members provide a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director.
8. IMLS awards NANH grants in September. IMLS notifies all applicants whether or not they have received an award. With their notification, all applicants receive anonymous copies of the panel reviews. IMLS also sends notification of the awards to each participating reviewer.

## **How Your Reviews Are Used**

Your scores determine the ranking of applications and are the basis for decisions about which proposals are recommended for funding and which are not.

For applications that are not funded, your comments may be used to revise proposals for future submission.

Successful applicants point to good scores and positive comments as a stamp of approval for their project applications. Museum administrators report that receiving IMLS awards enhances fundraising success with private foundations as well as state and local sources.

We greatly appreciate the tremendous amount of time and effort you commit to being a reviewer. By participating in the peer review process, you make a significant contribution to the NANH program and provide an invaluable service to the entire museum community. Thank you!

## Application Review Instructions

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### Verify Access to IMLS Online Reviewer System

The **IMLS Online Reviewer System** allows you to identify potential conflicts of interest and to enter your evaluative comments and scores for each application you review. Use the following link to verify that you have access to the IMLS Online Reviewer System:

<https://e-services.imls.gov/grantapps/reviewers.aspx>

To login, enter the email address you have on file with IMLS, and use the default password. An **E-Review Security Screen** will appear. Read this page and click **OK**.

Next, follow the on-screen instructions to create a user account and establish your own password.

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### Assess Potential Conflicts of Interest

After you have created a new password, your review assignment will appear. To access the list of applications assigned to you, click **VIEW**.

Read through your list of applications to see if there are any potential conflicts of interest. Please see “Complying With Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest” included as **Appendix I** of this handbook. A conflict of interest would arise if you have a financial interest in whether or not the application is funded, or if for some reason, you feel that you cannot review it objectively. Call or email your IMLS primary contact immediately if you have a conflict, or what may appear to be a conflict. (Do **not** check the box in the “Conflicts” column.)

If you have no conflicts of interest with any of the applicants on the list, click **SUBMIT CONFLICT OF INTERESTS STATEMENT** at the bottom of page.

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### Verify Access to Applications Online

The **Applications Online System** allows you to download the applications assigned to you. Detailed instructions for downloading applications are included as **Appendix II** of this handbook for easy reference.

Use the following link to verify that you have access to all your assigned applications and supporting documentation:

<http://applicationsonline.ims.gov>

For “User” and “Password”, refer to the email message from your IMLS primary contact.

Call or email your IMLS primary contact immediately if any applications are missing or if you cannot open them.

**Confidentiality:** The information contained in grant applications is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions’ project activities, or any other information contained in the applications. Call or email your IMLS primary contact if you have any questions concerning an application. Do not contact an applicant directly.



## Read Applications

Revisit the NANH guidelines at [http://www.ims.gov/applicants/2013\\_nanh\\_guidelines.aspx](http://www.ims.gov/applicants/2013_nanh_guidelines.aspx). Then read the applications, keeping in mind that your thorough review of each will be the key to providing both insightful comments and ratings. On the next page is a quick reference sheet that lists the review criteria and should serve as a guidepost for your review.

**Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services  
FY2013 Review Criteria**

<b>1. PROJECT JUSTIFICATION</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the project clearly explained?</li><li>• Is the need, problem, or challenge to be addressed clearly identified and supported by relevant evidence?</li><li>• Are the people who will benefit from the project clearly identified, and have they been involved in planning this project?</li><li>• Are the materials (e.g. objects, specimens, collections) that are the focus of the project and their current condition described and quantified in sufficient detail? (if applicable)</li><li>• Are the intended results well formulated and achievable?</li><li>• Are the ways in which this project strengthens museum services specific, actionable, and measurable?</li></ul>
<b>2. PROJECT WORK PLAN</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are the proposed activities, technologies, and/or methodologies informed by appropriate theory and practice?</li><li>• Are the technical details including all information required using the <a href="#">IMLS Specifications for Projects that Develop Digital Products</a> form provided for projects generating digital products?</li><li>• Do the identified staff, partners, consultants, and service providers possess the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully?</li><li>• Is the schedule of work realistic and achievable?</li><li>• Are the time, personnel, and financial resources identified appropriate for the scope and scale of the project?</li><li>• Does the institution provide evidence of its capacity to carry out the project activities and meet the cost-share requirement?</li><li>• Is a clear methodology described for tracking the project's progress and adjusting course when necessary?</li><li>• Is there an effective plan for communicating results and/or sharing discoveries?</li></ul>
<b>3. PROJECT RESULTS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are the project's intended results clearly articulated?</li><li>• Will direct collections care, organizational capacity for collections care, and/or public awareness of the importance of collection care be improved as a result of this project? (if applicable)</li><li>• Will the tangible products be useful?</li><li>• Are the <a href="#">measures of success</a> in achieving results appropriate for the project?</li><li>• Is there a reasonable and practical plan for sustaining the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of this grant?</li></ul>

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## Draft Comments

Draft comments for each of the three narrative sections. We strongly recommend that you draft your comments using a word-processing program for later copying and pasting them into the IMLS Online Reviewer System (see **Appendix III**).

When considering your comments:

- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Judge the application on its own merits. Do not base your evaluation on any prior knowledge of an institution.
- If you question the accuracy of any information, call us to discuss it. Do not question the applicant's honesty or integrity in your written comments.
- Do not contact the applicants.

### Characteristics of Constructive and Effective Comments

- They are presented in a constructive manner.
- They are concise, specific, and easy to read and understand.
- They acknowledge the resources of the institution.
- They are specific to the individual applicant.
- They correlate with the score given.
- They reflect the application's strengths and identify areas for improvement.
- They are directed to applicants for their use.

### Characteristics of Poor Comments

- They make derogatory remarks. (Offer suggestions for improvement rather than harsh criticism.)
- They penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money. (Any eligible institution may receive funds, regardless of need.)
- They penalize an applicant because of missing materials. (If you believe an application is missing required materials, please contact your IMLS primary contact immediately.)
- They offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information. (Your comments should concern only the information IMLS requests of applicants.)
- They simply summarize or paraphrase the applicant's own words.

***Remember that successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to help improve their projects or future applications.***

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## Assign Scores

After entering and saving comments in the IMLS Online Reviewer System for each application's three review criteria, assign a single numeric score that reflects your overall opinion of the proposal under "Application Overview." You will also need to enter a brief written comment in that area before you can save the score. Use a scale of 1 to 5, as described below. Use only whole numbers; do not use fractions, decimals, zeroes, or more than one number.

<b>SCORE DEFINITIONS</b>	
<b>5 – Excellent</b>	The applicant’s response is outstanding and provides exceptional support for the proposed project.
<b>4 – Very Good</b>	The applicant’s response provides solid support for the proposed project.
<b>3 – Good</b>	The applicant’s response is adequate but could be strengthened in its support for the proposed project.
<b>2 – Some Merit</b>	The applicant’s response is flawed and does not adequately support the proposed project.
<b>1 – Inadequate / Insufficient</b>	The applicant’s response is inadequate or provides insufficient information to allow for a confident evaluation.

*IMPORTANT:* To help applicants understand and benefit from your reviews, make sure that your scores accurately reflect your written comments.



## **Review Your Work**

Review your draft comments and preliminary scores. A review with even one comment or score cannot be accepted by the IMLS Online Reviewer System. Adjust your overall score, if necessary, to reflect more accurately your written evaluation. Scores should support comments, and comments should justify scores.

**For all questions about reviewing, either technical or programmatic, please call or email your IMLS primary contact directly. Please do not use the IMLS Online Reviewer System help buttons, as your question may not receive an immediate response.**

Once you have completed assigning scores and providing comments for each application assigned to you, we recommend that you print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files. Then click on the submit box to send the entire review to IMLS.

### **Tips**

There are a few points regarding the use of the Online Reviewer System of which you should be aware:

- When accessing this system, use only the email address we have on file for you.
- Once you submit your reviews, you cannot go back in to make revisions. If you feel you need to make a change, you must contact your IMLS primary contact, and we will authorize your re-entry into the system. However, prior to submitting your reviews, you may repeatedly enter and exit the system without losing your information.

**Deadline:** The deadline to submit NANH reviews is **XXXX, 2013**.

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### **Prepare for Panel Meeting**

At the panel meeting we will provide you with laptops loaded with all NANH applications. You will also have access to the Online Reviewer System.

During panel we present and discuss each proposal. You will serve as a “presenter” for some of your assigned applications. When those proposals are discussed, you will start the discussion by giving a brief synopsis of the project (no more than three minutes), and then move on to your evaluative comments. After your synopsis and review, the other assigned readers will explain their ratings and evaluation of each application. When all three readers have explained their ratings, other panelists will have the opportunity to join the discussion. You will be given the opportunity to edit your comments and scores in the Online Reviewer System when the discussion is over.

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 NANH program and these proposals are collectively meeting the needs of the field.

I look forward to seeing you here in Washington, DC.

**Managing Copies:** Keep your applications and a copy of your review sheets until **September 30, 2013**, in case there are questions from IMLS staff.

Please maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review.

After September 30, 2013, destroy the applications and review sheets.

**Thank you for serving as a Native American/Native Hawaiian  
Museum Services Reviewer!**

## Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Should I consider new projects more competitive than resubmissions?**

No. All projects, whether new or resubmissions, should be considered on the basis of the current application. An institution's application history should not be a factor in your evaluation.
- 2. What should I do if I discover something missing in the application or if the applicant did not complete all parts of the application?**

Call your IMLS primary contact immediately. We may be able to send you the missing materials if they were submitted as part of the original application. DO NOT contact the applicant.
- 3. Should I consider need when evaluating an application?**

No. Need is not a review criterion.
- 4. To whom should the review comments be addressed?**

Please address all comments to the applicant. While IMLS staff and panelists read the comments, it is important to write the comments to the applicant so they may use them constructively.
- 5. What should I do if I find that I know someone mentioned in the application?**

Contact your IMLS primary contact immediately and discuss the possibility of a conflict of interest. Not all cases are conflicts, but please call us to discuss your situation.
- 6. Must I make comments for every question?**

Yes. You must make a constructive and substantive comment for every question. This is the best way to help applicants improve all aspects of their applications.
- 7. Why do some institutions have such high indirect cost rates, and should my scoring take this into account?**

Some institutions may seem to have high indirect cost rates because of the infrastructure involved in carrying out a project within that institution. Also, an institution may have a high rate if they are in a very isolated geographic area, making it more expensive to carry on daily activities. Please do not allow these rates to bias your reviews or affect your scores.
- 8. Is one part of the narrative more important than another?**

No. All three sections of the narrative have equal weight and are equally important in identifying the overall strengths and weaknesses of an application.
- 9. Can a proposed project use its staff as its target audience?**

Yes. The staff is a reasonable target audience when a project is a behind-the-scenes or an infrastructure project that ultimately helps museum staff serve their public better.
- 10. Should the size or age of the institution be considered when evaluating an application?**

No, these are not review criteria. The applicant should be evaluated using the stated evaluation criteria outlined on the Panel Review Criteria Quick Reference Sheet.