



Museums for America

FY2013 MFA

Field Reviewer Handbook

Learning Experiences
Community Anchors
Collections Stewardship

IMLS Contacts

As a field reviewer for FY2013 Museums for America, you received an email message from your IMLS primary contact. This person will serve as your first point of contact and will be happy to answer questions and provide guidance for the reviewing process. Below is a list of all IMLS staff who can also serve as a resource for you.

Connie Bodner
cbodner@imls.gov
202.653.4636

Tim Carrigan
tcarrigan@imls.gov
202.653.4639

Mark Feitl
mfeitl@imls.gov
202.653.4635

Mark Isaksen
misaksen@imls.gov
202.653.4667

Reagan Moore
rmoore@imls.gov
202.653.4637

Sandra Narva
snarva@imls.gov
202.653.4634

Jennifer Rehkamp
JRehkamp@imls.gov
202.653.4781

Steve Shwartzman
sshwartzman@imls.gov
202.653.4641

Helen Wechsler
hwechsler@imls.gov
202.653.4779

Welcome to The MFA Program Review Process

Thank you for offering to serve as a Museums for America (MFA) field reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your professional expertise in one of the project categories (Learning Experiences, Community Anchors, Collections Stewardship). We have prepared this handbook specifically for field reviewers 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 Museums for America Guidelines available at:

http://www.ims.gov/applicants/2013_museums_for_america_guidelines.aspx

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

Purpose and Scope of the Museums for America Program

The goal of the Museums for America (MFA) program is to strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve the public more effectively by supporting high-priority activities that advance its mission, plans, and strategic goals and objectives.

MFA grants support activities that strengthen museums as active resources for lifelong learning, as important institutions in the establishment of livable communities, and as good stewards of the nation's collections. MFA grants can fund both new and ongoing museum activities and programs. Examples include planning, managing, and conserving collections; improving public access; training; conducting programmatic research; school and public programming; producing exhibitions; and integrating new or upgraded technologies into a museum's operations.

The Museums for America program accepts applications under three project categories;

- *Learning Experiences*: IMLS places the learner at the center and supports engaging experiences in museums that prepare people to be full participants in their local communities and our global society. Projects should deliver high quality, inclusive, accessible and audience-focused programs and services for lifelong learning in formal or informal settings.
- *Community Anchors*: IMLS promotes museums as strong community anchors that enhance civic engagement, cultural opportunities, and economic vitality. Projects should address common community challenges and demonstrate how the applicant museum improves the quality of life and enriches community members' knowledge and understanding of critical local and global issues, provides forums for community dialogue, and/or connects individuals to resources in the broader community service infrastructure through its programs and services. Projects may include capacity-building activities that position the applicant museum to be more effective in fulfilling its role as a community anchor institution.

- *Collections Stewardship*: IMLS supports exemplary stewardship of museum collections and promotes the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage. Projects should support the care and management of collections to expand and sustain access for current and future generations. Projects should reflect systematic, holistic, logical approaches to the documentation, preservation, and conservation of tangible and digital collections to sustain and improve public access.

Note: The FY2013 Museums for America program incorporates applications previously solicited through the Conservation Project Support program, including surveys, treatments, and environmental improvements.

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 field reviewers with appropriate expertise and assign three reviewers to evaluate each application.
4. Field reviewers receive online access to the applications, evaluate them, and complete their reviews online.
5. IMLS uses field reviewers' comments and scores to rank the applications and determine which applications are sent for panel review.
6. MFA panels meet in Washington, DC, after the field review period to provide a second level of review and make final funding recommendations. Panelists rely on field reviewers to point out specific technical strengths and weaknesses of each application. Panelists review applications from a broad perspective, identifying those that best meet IMLS program goals. They also provide insight into issues pertinent to this year's competition as well as provide recommendations on improving the grant program, its application, and its process.
7. IMLS staff members review the budgets and past performance of the highest ranked applications.
8. IMLS staff members provide a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director.
9. IMLS awards Museums for America 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 field and panel reviews. IMLS also sends notification of the awards to each participating reviewer.

How Your Reviews Are Used

Your scores inform the ranking of applications and are the basis for decisions about which applications receive further consideration. For those that go to panel review, your work helps panelists understand the strengths and weaknesses of each application. Your comments also help unsuccessful applicants revise their applications for future grant cycles.

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 Museums for America grant program and provide an invaluable service to the entire museum community. Thank you!

Application Review Instructions

1

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: **password**. An **E-Review Security Screen** will appear. Read this page and click **OK**.

Next, create a user account and establish your own password.

2

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.

3

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.imls.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 MFA guidelines at

http://www.ims.gov/applicants/museums_for_america_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.

Museums for America FY2013 Field Review Criteria Quick Reference

1. PROJECT JUSTIFICATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project clearly explained? • Is the need, problem, or challenge to be addressed clearly identified and supported by relevant evidence? • <i>For Collections Stewardship:</i> 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? • Are the people who will benefit from the project clearly identified, and have they been involved in planning this project? • Are the intended results well formulated and achievable? • Are the ways in which this project advances your institution's strategic plan specific, actionable, and measurable? • Does the project align with the selected MFA project category: Learning Experiences, Community Anchors, or Collections Stewardship?
2. PROJECT WORK PLAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the proposed activities, technologies, and/or methodologies informed by appropriate theory and practice? • Are the technical details including all information required using the <i>IMLS Specifications for Projects that Develop Digital Products</i> form provided for projects generating digital products? • Do the identified staff, partners, consultants, and service providers possess the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully? • Is the schedule of work realistic and achievable? • Are the time, personnel, and financial resources identified appropriate for the scope and scale of the project? • Does the institution provide evidence of its capacity to carry out the project activities and meet the cost-share requirement? • Is a clear methodology described for tracking the project's progress and adjusting course when necessary? • Is there an effective plan for communicating results and/or sharing discoveries?
3. PROJECT RESULTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the project's intended results clearly articulated? • <i>For Collections Stewardship:</i> 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? • Will the tangible products be useful? • Are the measures of success in achieving results appropriate for the project? • Is there a reasonable and practical plan for sustaining the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of this grant?

5

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.

6

Assign Scores

Assign a preliminary score to each narrative section. Use a scale of 1 to 7, as described below. Use only whole numbers; do not use fractions, zeroes, or more than one number.

SCORE DEFINITIONS	
7 – Exceptional	The applicant’s response is exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses in its support of the proposed project.
6 – Excellent	The applicant’s response is very strong with no more than one minor weakness in its support of the proposed project.
5 – Very Good	The applicant’s response is strong with only a few minor weaknesses in its support for the proposed project.
4 – Good	The applicant’s response is adequate but with numerous minor weaknesses in its support for the proposed project.
3 – Some Merit	The applicant’s response may have some strengths but has at least one moderate weakness in its support for the proposed project.
2 – Poor	The applicant’s response is deficient and has at least one major weakness in its support of the proposed project.
1 – Inadequate / Insufficient	The applicant’s response is either inadequate or insufficient to evaluate fully and/or has numerous major weaknesses in its support of the proposed project.
<i>Minor</i>	<i>An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen the impact of the project</i>
<i>Moderate</i>	<i>A weakness that lessens the impact of the project</i>
<i>Major</i>	<i>A weakness that severely limits the impact of the project</i>

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 missing score or comment cannot be accepted by the IMLS Online Reviewer System. Adjust your scores, 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 MFA reviews is **April 5, 2013**.



Submitting Materials to IMLS

You will receive, via email, a Peer Reviewer Services Agreement and the Direct Deposit Sign-Up form. Please print, complete, scan, and email the forms to Katrina Dixon at kdixon@imls.gov. Honoraria are paid electronically, and you must complete the Direct Deposit Sign-Up form in its entirety, even if you submitted a similar form in a prior year with the identical banking information.

Should you decide to mail rather than email your Peer Reviewer Services Agreement and Direct Deposit Sign-Up form, please send both to:

IMLS
Office of Museum Services
Attention: Katrina Dixon
1800 M Street NW, 9th Floor
Washington DC 20036-5802

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 an MFA Field 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, such as universities, 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 Field Review Criteria Quick Reference Sheet.

Appendix I

Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

As a reviewer for IMLS, you perform a vital role in ensuring the integrity of the IMLS's peer review process and must carry out your duties in accordance with government ethics rules. Before you evaluate applications, we ask that you review the following *General Principles of Ethical Conduct* and *Summary of the Conflict of Interest Laws*. You will be asked to certify compliance with the IMLS Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement and Certification. IMLS allocates up to one hour of your reviewer time for you to consider these materials.

If, at any time in the course of performing your duties at IMLS, you believe you may have a conflict of interest, please contact the IMLS program officer coordinating your review process. Other questions about the ethics rules and responsibilities may be directed to IMLS's Designated Agency Ethics Official, Nancy E. Weiss, General Counsel, who can be reached at ethics@imls.gov; (202) 653-4787; or 1800 M Street, NW, 9th Floor, Washington, DC 20036.

General Principles of Ethical Conduct

1. Public service is a public trust, requiring you to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
2. You shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
3. You shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. You shall not, except pursuant to such reasonable exceptions as are provided by regulation, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by IMLS, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the your duties.
5. You shall put forth honest effort in the performance of your duties.
6. You shall make no unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Government.
7. You shall not use public office for private gain.
8. You shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
9. You shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.
10. You shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.
11. You shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
12. You shall satisfy in good faith your obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those -- such as Federal, State, or local taxes -- that are imposed by law.

13. You shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.
 14. You shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that you are violating the law or the ethical standards.
-

Summary of Conflict of Interest Laws

18 U.S.C. § 201 – Prohibits you from acceptance of bribes or gratuities to influence Government actions.

18 U.S.C. § 203 – Prohibits you from accepting compensation for representational activities involving certain matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

18 U.S.C. § 205 – Prohibits you from certain involvement in claims against the United States or representing another before the Government in matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

18 U.S.C. § 207 – Imposes certain restrictions on you related to your activities after Government service.

18 U.S.C. § 208 – Prohibits you from participating in certain Government matters affecting your own financial interests or the interests of your spouse, minor child, general partner, or organization in which you are serving as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee.

18 U.S.C. § 209 – Prohibits you from being paid by someone other than the United States for doing their official Government duties.

Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), you may receive a grant application for review 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 the IMLS program officer who is coordinating the review process.

Certification (submitted online)

I acknowledge that I have reviewed the ethics training materials included in the Reviewer Handbook and the Conflict of Interest Statement above. To the best of my knowledge, I have no conflict of interest that would preclude my service to the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Name (Printed)

Signature

Date

Appendix II

How to Locate Your Applications Online Using the IMLS Applications Online System to Download Applications for Review

These instructions will help you locate the PDF documents for each of the applications assigned to you. Be sure to download all the applications to your own workstation so that you can perform your work.

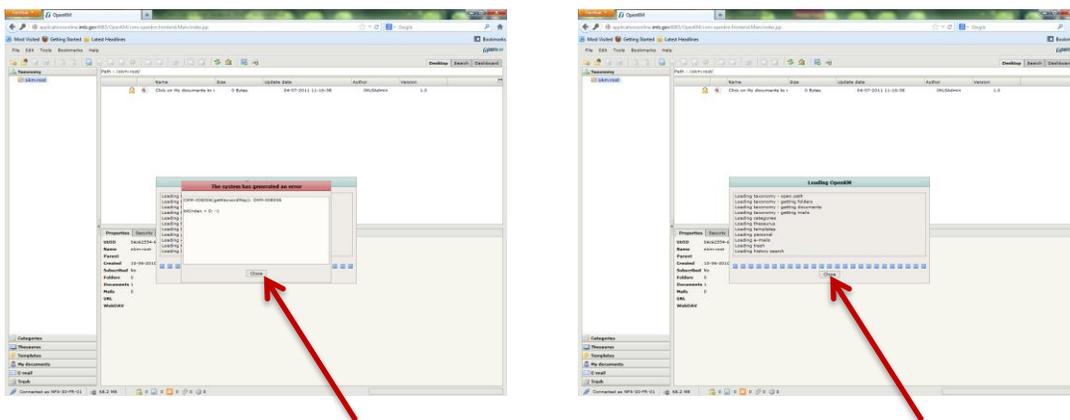
Accessing the Applications Online System

To begin, go to <http://applicationsonline.ims.gov> where you will see the login screen as below:

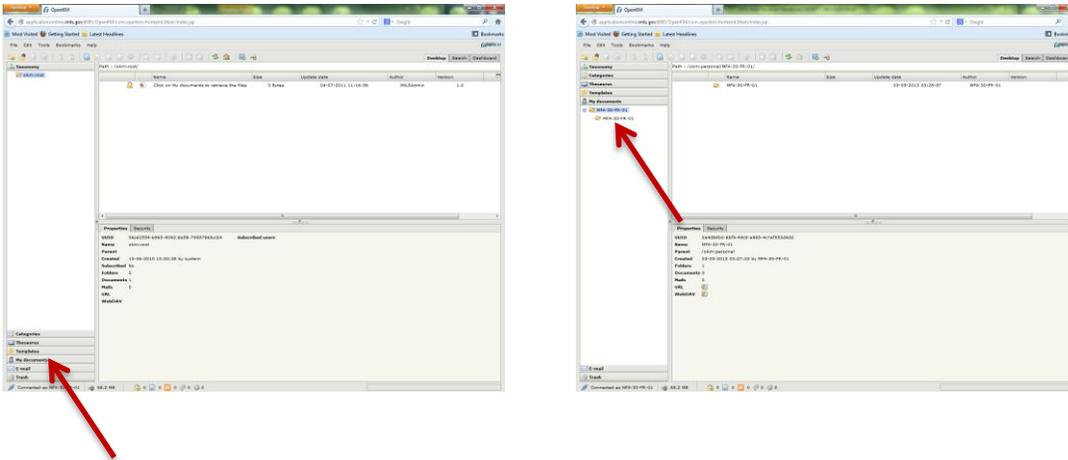


Enter the **User** and **Password** information provided to you in the same email message in which you received this handbook.

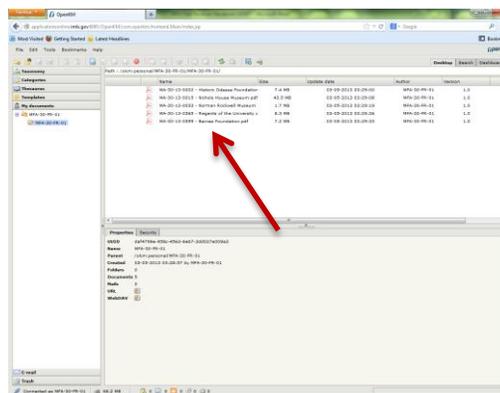
Depending on your computer system, you may need to click **Close** on two (or more) error messages.



On the left side of the next screen, click on the section tab labeled **My documents** to generate a list of files available for download. Then click on the folder below it.



Here you will find all the applications for your review. By double-clicking on each one, you can open and save each document to your computer.



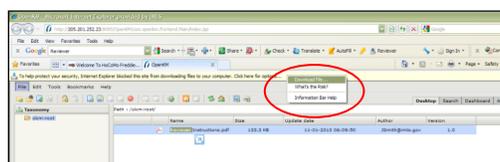
Some institutions use firewalls as a way to protect their computer systems. If you have difficulty accessing your applications, you might wish to check with your Information Technology (IT) staff to see if a firewall might be the problem. They will help you work through it.

You may get an Internet Explorer warning message like the following:



If you receive the warning message that Internet Explorer is blocking the download, then

- right-click on the yellow message bar for options and
- click on “Download File” as follows:

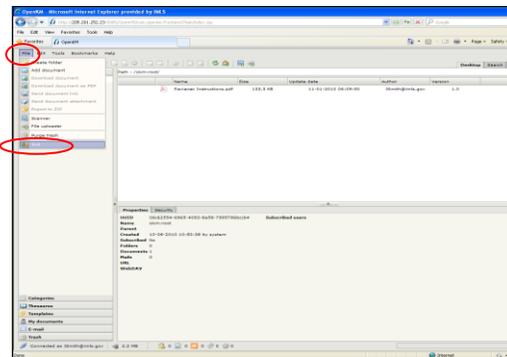


The **File Download** dialog box should open. Click on **Save**, and the save window will open.



Save the document in a convenient place so that you can refer to it when you wish. Return to **My documents** to open and save the remaining files to your computer.

Once you have finished saving all the files, click on **File**, and then click **Exit**.



Click on **Close** to completely log off the system.



each narrative section, using numbers between 1 and 7 and the score definitions described on page 9 in this handbook.

- Note: “**Funding Priorities Addressed**” is not relevant. You may simply ignore the radio button choice.
- Once you have completed an application review, click the **SAVE & CLOSE** box at the bottom of the screen. You will return to the **Applications List** and may choose another application to review.

Revisiting Online Reviewer System

- With your email address and your new password, you will be able to re-enter the Online Reviewer System and complete or edit your reviews as often as you wish.
- Once you have logged in, the Security screen will appear again. Click **OK**.
- Once your review assignment appears, click **VIEW** in order to access the **Applications List** and proceed with the review process.

Completing Your Online Reviews

- Once you have reviewed all applications assigned to you, the **Application Review Status** column should read **COMPLETE** beside each application.
- Please **PRINT** each review for your records.
- Once you have completed all your reviews, click **I AM READY TO SUBMIT THIS REVIEW TO IMLS** at the bottom of the screen.

IMLS Online Reviewer System Help FAQs

This system was created several years ago in a Microsoft-based platform. While state-of-the-art at the time of development, it has not been updated. The system still works, but it can be frustrating at first. Once you have a few reviews underway, it should prove an efficient process for managing and submitting your reviews. **Our recommendation is to test out the system early.** Try to do your initial experiments between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm EST so we can be available to assist you

Here are some common user issues and our advice for addressing them:

What web browser should I use?

Internet Explorer is the only reliable Web browser that will successfully work with the Online Reviewer System. Unfortunately, Mac users and those using Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Camino, and Opera may **not** be able work with our review system. Also we have heard that Microsoft Vista does not work well either. Our recommendation is to use Internet Explorer 6.0 or later.

Do any of the buttons for assistance work?

No. Please contact your IMLS primary contact for help if you have any problems.

What is the best way to get started or comfortable with the system?

Try logging into the system and entering some practice remarks to get a feel for the set up and information display. Obviously, as the deadline approaches to complete your reviews, you can concentrate more on the substance of your reviews rather than the process of entering the information.