Native American/ Native Hawaiian Museum Services

2009 Field Reviewer Handbook

For information call IMLS
(202) 653-4634 or (202) 653-4641
OR email
snarva@imls.gov
rfurrow@imls.gov
rtrio@imls.gov

The Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program Review Process

Thank you for offering to serve as a Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services (NANH) field reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your professional experience in museums, cultural centers, or professional service organizations that serve museums, as well as your strong understanding of museum or cultural center operations and/or understanding of the creation and development of educational programming, professional development, and related museum services.

The staff at IMLS prepared this handbook specifically for field reviewers to ensure the fair and candid review of all eligible applications. It will provide you with the procedural and technical information you need. Please use it in tandem with this year's *Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Grant Application and Guidelines*.

Even if you have reviewed for other IMLS programs, you should review this booklet since the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services program differs from other programs in various ways.

Goals of the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program

Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services program enables Native American tribes and organizations that primarily serve Native Hawaiians to benefit their communities and audiences through strengthened museum services in the following areas:

<u>Programming</u>
Services and activities that support the educational mission of museums and museum related organizations, including, but not limited to, activities such as:

- Exhibits
- Research and interpretation
- Educational resources such as Web sites, curricula, digital content, and publications
- Educational demonstrations and performances, including workshops, classes, and presentations.

<u>Professional Development</u>
Education or training that builds skills, knowledge or other professional capacity for individuals who provide or manage museum service activities. Individuals can be paid or volunteer, and involved with museum services either currently or in the future. Activities include, but are not limited to:

- Creation and offerings of courses, workshops, in-person or distance learning opportunities
- Enrollment in courses, workshops, in-person or distance learning opportunities
- Attendance at conferences or technical assistance to strengthen

museum services and activities
- Organizational support for internships and fellowships (awards not made to individuals)

Enhancement of Museum Services
Support for activities that enable and improve museum services, including, but not limited to:
- Planning, including strategic planning, policy development, and disaster preparedness and risk management
- Improvement implementation, including technology and other resources, equipment purchase, security, public access. Construction projects not allowed.
- Heritage preservation, including collections care and management
- Hiring of temporary or permanent staff to support museum services

Applicants were asked to select one activity category reflecting their project goals. IMLS defined projects or programs in the widest terms possible. Although some applications may touch on all three goals, ultimately the project proposed should focus on the category indicated by the applicant.

For this program, the applicant is 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.

Eligible Activities

IMLS sees the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services program as an investment in strengthening museum services supported by federally recognized tribes and groups established to primarily service Native Hawaiians. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Staffing
- Costs related to planning and maintenance of project partnerships
- Staff training
- Purchase of equipment, materials, supplies, or services
- Program development and implementation
- Exhibition research, design, and fabrication
- Travel
- Publications
- Integration of technology into exhibition or educational programs
- Research
- Collections care and management

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- Publications
- Strategic planning and disaster preparedness
- Indirect or overhead costs

Ineligible Activities

Grant funds may not be used to support:

- Acquisition of collections
- Ceremonies
- Construction
- Contributions to endowments
- Costs incurred prior to the start of the grant period
- Entertainment
- Social activities

Program Process

1. Applicants register with Grants.gov and download the grant application guidelines; they complete the application forms and upload forms and attachments to the Grants.gov portal.

2. IMLS receives the applications and checks them for eligibility and completeness.

3. IMLS identifies a pool of available field reviewers. IMLS assigns three museum professionals to evaluate each application.

4. IMLS matches grant applications to field reviewers with appropriate expertise.

5. Field reviewers receive the applications, evaluate them, and complete their online reviews.

6. IMLS processes comments and scores, and ranks the applications. This ranking will be used to determine which applications are sent to the review panel. The panel will make final recommendations based on the field review comments as well as their own expertise.

7. NANH review panel meets to provide a second level of review and make final funding recommendations. The review panel will be comprised of museum and cultural center professions that have experience in tribal and Native Hawaiian museums, and are familiar with associated cultural issues. Panelists are not asked to do detailed technical reviews. IMLS staff and the NANH panelists are relying on you to point out specific strengths and weaknesses of each proposal you evaluate. Panelists meet in Washington, DC, in July, after the field review period. Panelists review applications from a broad perspective, identifying applications 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

process.

8. IMLS staff reviews the financial/accounting information and the budget sheets of each potential grantee.

9. IMLS staff members provide a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director for her approval.

10. IMLS awards Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services grants in mid-September. At that time, IMLS notifies all applicants by mail whether or not they have received an award. With their notification, all applicants receive the reviews that their field reviewers and panelists completed. We also send notification of the awards to all participating reviewers.

How Your Reviews Are Used

Your scores determine the ranking of applications upon which IMLS determines those going to the sitting panel, and which will not.

For those applications that go to panel review, your reviews will provide the basis for the panel review, directing panelists to the strengths and weaknesses of an application. If a panel-reviewed application is not funded, your review comments and panel comments assist the applicant in revising their application for future submission.

Applicants whose proposals are not ranked highly enough for panel review will only receive your field review comments.

Successful applicants point to good scores and positive comments as a stamp of approval for their project proposals. Museum administrators report that receiving IMLS awards enhance fundraising success with private foundations or state and local sources. Unsuccessful applicants use reviewer comments to improve or revise their applications for resubmission.

How You Can Get Feedback On Your Performance

After we announce awards for the NANH program in September, we invite you to call the IMLS Office of Museum Services to schedule an appointment to discuss your reviews and provide feedback.

We greatly appreciate the tremendous amount of time and effort you committed to being a reviewer. By participating in the peer review process, you make a significant contribution to the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services grant program and are providing an invaluable service to the entire museum community. Thank you!

Questions about the field review process?
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Application Review Instructions

First Steps

This section of the handbook contains detailed information on how to review a Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services program application. If you encounter any problems while undertaking your pre-panel reviews, please contact an IMLS staff person:

Sandra Narva
phone: (202) 653-4634
email: snarva@imls.gov

Reagan Furrow
phone: (202) 653-4637
email: rfurrow@imls.gov

Robert Trio
phone: (202) 653-4689
email: rtrio@imls.gov

Check Shipping Envelope and CD

If you have not already done so, refer to the contents on the Reviewer Checklist. Open the enclosed CD to check that all applications are there can be opened. Contact IMLS immediately if any of the items listed are missing, or if any applications are missing or cannot be opened.

Conflict of Interest

Read through your list of applications to see if there are any potential conflicts of interest. Please see the Conflict of Interest Statement included in your packet. A conflict of interest would be if you have a financial interest in whether or not the proposal is funded, or if for some reason, you feel that you cannot review it objectively. Contact IMLS immediately if you have a conflict, or what may appear to be a conflict.

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. Contact IMLS if you have any questions concerning an application – do not contact an applicant directly.

Read Applications

Read your applications to develop a feel for the range of responses. Before reading your applications, reread the narrative questions and guidelines on pages 28 -29 of the *2009 Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Application and Guidelines*. Additionally, a NANH evaluation criteria list is included in your review package. Place this sheet in your workspace where you can easily refer to it throughout the review process. The listed items represent the types of information you should look for in the applicant's responses and should serve as guideposts for your review.

Evaluate Applications

Read your applications again and take notes as you read. Draft comments for each of the three narrative responses. Utilize the evaluation criteria on the Review Evaluation Criteria sheet. We strongly recommend that you draft your comments using Microsoft Word, and then cut and paste them onto the online review form (see page 8 for more details).

- 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 IMLS to discuss it; DO NOT question the applicant's honesty or integrity in your written comments.
- DO NOT contact the museum.
- Acknowledge and compliment strengths.
- Consider a project's strengths *and* weaknesses; acknowledge and compliment strengths; offer practical suggestions for improving weaknesses.
- Consider whether the applicant has the resources to successfully complete the project.
- Comments should *analyze* the narrative section of the application; summarizing or paraphrasing the applicant's own words will not help the applicant.
- Comments should be specific to the individual applicant; vague, general statements are not helpful.
- Comments should be easy to read and understand.
- Comments should address both positive aspects as well as areas for improvement.

Remember that IMLS staff uses your comments to help applicants improve their future applications.

Qualities of a Good Proposal

A good NANH proposal will demonstrate how Native American tribes or organizations that primarily serve Native Hawaiians will benefit their communities and audiences through strengthened museum services.

Assign Scores

Assign preliminary scores to each narrative section. Use a scale of 1 to 7.
1 = Lowest; 7 = Highest

- Use whole numbers only
- Do not use fractions, decimals, zeros, or more than one number

The definitions of the numerical scores are:

SCORE	DEFINITION
1	Applicant's response provides insufficient information for evaluation.
2	Applicant's response provides inadequate support for the proposed project activities.
3	Applicant's response provides minimal support for the proposed project.
4	Applicant's response provides adequate support for the proposed project activities.

5 Applicant's response provides good support for the proposed project activities.
6 Applicant's response provides superior support for the proposed project activities.
7 Applicant's response provides exceptional support for the proposed project activities.

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

Type Size and Format

The application does not provide a form for the narrative part of the application. Applicants can divide the space for narrative responses as they wish, as long as all questions are addressed in number order as indicated on in the application guidelines and the narrative response does not exceed seven pages. A minimum one-quarter inch margin should be left on the sides and bottom of the page.

If you see a problem, however,

- Call IMLS at (202) 653-4789.
- Review the application. DO NOT lower an applicant's score because of reduced type or reformatting.
- DO NOT note the problem on your review sheet itself, but rather as a separate note for IMLS only.

We will assign penalties as needed.

Review Your Work

Review your draft comments and preliminary scores. When you are finished, proofread your reviews. Adjust your scores, if necessary, to more accurately reflect your written evaluation. Scores must support comments and comments should justify scores.

Write Specific Comments and Assign Scores

Type your final comments and scores on your online review sheets (for narrative sections 1-4 plus general comments if applicable). For each application, you must complete an online review including:

- Written comments about the applicant's narrative responses.
- A corresponding score for each response.
- Application overview (general comments), optional.

Note: Make use of all the space provided on the online review sheets.

Selecting Final Scores

After you write your comments, select an appropriate score from 1 to 7 (1 = lowest; 7 = highest) for each of the four narrative responses using the IMLS scoring definitions (see Assign Scores on pages 6-7). Enter the scores on your online review sheets. Your typed comments and corresponding scores should always support each other.

The Online Review Process

All reviewers must use the online review process. Just follow these steps:

Access this link:
https://e-services.imls.gov/grantapps/reviewers.aspx

Your login is the e-mail address that is on file with IMLS.
Your password is "password", unless you already established a password in previous years.

When you login to create your user account you will need to assign a new password.

The instructions for creating and submitting your reviews will be at your fingertips. When you visit the site, there is a hotlink for technical questions. These questions will be sent directly to our computer technicians that are working with us to design this system. If you have other questions about reviewing, please contact IMLS staff at (202) 653-4789.

Once you have completed assigning scores and providing comments for each application assigned to you, submit the entire review to IMLS. Make sure to print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files.

Reminders

The online review process is a wonderful tool; however, there are a few points regarding the use of the online review process of which you should be aware:

- When accessing this system you can only use the e-mail address we have on file for you.
- Once you submit your reviews, you cannot go back in and make revisions. To do so, you must contact IMLS and we will authorize your re-entry into the system so you can make changes. However, prior to submitting your reviews, you can repeatedly enter and exit the system without losing your information.
- The online review system seems to work best with Internet Explorer, Firefox and Safari.
- Complete your online reviews by **June 12, 2009**.

Constructive and Effective Comments

As you formulate your comments, keep in mind the following characteristics of good, constructive remarks:

- They are presented in a constructive manner
- Concise, specific, easy to read and understand
- Specific to the individual applicant
- Correlate with the score that is given
- Acknowledge the resources of the institution
- Reflect the application's strengths and identified areas for improvement
- Directed to applicants for their use

Remember, both successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to improve their institutions and future applications. Each of the sample comments listed below is followed by an explanation of its good characteristics.

Statement of Need:
"The proposal presents a clear and precise narrative of the need for the preservation of their important document collection and the dissemination of information relative to their cooperative documentary. The project participants are uniquely familiar with the collection, its needs, and how best to utilize the material." (Provides specific information)

"This project goes hand-in-hand with the museum's strategic plan and mission statement. This project will directly go to improving the membership base and provide a better access to the community." (Provides a good explanation of how this project fits into the strategic plan)

Project Resources: Time, Personnel, and Budget:
"The budget is realistic for the numbers of participants, and for the compensation of consultants and the number of hours for the assistance for this project." (Provides specific information)

Impact:
"The evaluation plan includes both on-going evaluation of project implementation and of project outcomes for the participants. It would have been good to have a bit more information about the criteria that will be used to pre- and post-test workshop participants in order to evaluate the effectiveness of project activities." (Provides specific information and a constructive comment)

Avoiding Poor Comments

Vague, derogatory, or extraneous remarks are not helpful to either panelists or applicants. These comments actually hinder the evaluation process rather than help it.

To avoid making poor comments, DO NOT:

- Make derogatory remarks. Offer suggestions for improvement rather

than harsh criticism.

- Penalize an applicant because you feel the institution doesn't need the money. Any eligible institution may receive funds, regardless of need.
- Penalize an applicant because of missing materials. If you believe an application is missing required materials, please contact IMLS immediately.
- Question an applicant's honesty or integrity. You may question the accuracy of information provided by the applicant, but if you are unsure how to raise your question, contact IMLS.
- Offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information – your comments should concern only the information IMLS requests of applicants.

Each of the sample poor comments listed below is followed by an explanation of why it is a poor comment.

Statement of Need:
"This project fits into the overall "big picture" of the art museum and the university as a whole." (Vague, not evaluative)

"Not necessarily a highly polished application, which in this case is a strength. It adds to the expressed need." (Insensitive and irrelevant)

Project Design:
"Efficient breakdown of categories for the individual part of the project." (Vague, irrelevant, not evaluative)

Project Resources: Time, Personnel, and Budget:
"The project budget is reasonable for this kind of project." (Vague, not evaluative)

"The personnel are clearly experienced and qualified." (Vague, not evaluative)

"Having clear job description of museum fellow. Are there plans to sustain job position?" (Vague, not evaluative)

Impact:
"Evaluation is both financial compliance and administrative review." (Vague, not evaluative)

Reviewer Material

Deadline	The Deadline to submit IMLS panel reviews via the online review interface is **June 12, 2009**.
Keep Copies Until	Keep your applications and a copy of your review sheets until October 1, 2009 (in case IMLS staff has questions). ▪ Maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review. ▪ After October 1, 2009, destroy the applications (you may keep optional attachments such as catalogs and brochures).

Thank you for serving as a NANH Field Reviewer!

Questions about the field review process?
Contact Sandra Narva at (202) 653-4634 or snarva@imls.gov

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How should I assign scores?**
   Scores should be assigned for all of the 4 narrative questions, based on the scale of 1–7 discussed on pages 6 -7 of this booklet.

2. **Should new projects be considered more competitive than existing ones?**
   No, a museum does not have to create a new project in order to be competitive. NANH can fund ongoing activities.

3. **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 infrastructure project that ultimately helps museum staff serve their public better.

4. **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 IMLS immediately! IMLS may be able to send you the missing materials, or will contact the applicant for you. DO NOT contact the applicant.

5. **Should the size or age of the institution be considered when evaluating their application?**
   No, these are not review criteria. The applicant should be evaluated using the stated evaluation criteria outlined on the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Evaluation Criteria Sheet.

6. **To whom should the review comments be addressed?**
   Please address all comments to the applicant. While IMLS staff and panelists do read the comments, it is important to address the comments to the applicant so that they may use them most constructively for their project.

7. **What should I do if I find that I know someone mentioned in the application?**
   Call IMLS immediately and discuss the possibility of a conflict of interest. Not all cases are conflicts, but please call to discuss your situation.

8. **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 an applicant improve all aspects of their project.

9. **What are indirect costs rates, and why do some institutions have such a high rate?**
   Indirect cost rates are negotiated rates for institutions to charge overhead costs when completing a project. Some institutions have very high rates because of the infrastructure involved in carrying out a project within that organization. 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.

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10. Can a project be just for planning?

Yes, planning projects are eligible, however, the applicant must justify how this planning helps them reach their stated goals.

11. Is there any part of the application that carries more weight than another?

No, all sections of the application have equal weight. Each score is important in determining the overall strengths and weaknesses of a proposal.

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