



# National Leadership Grants

## 2011 Panelist Handbook

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*IMLS*

## Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a National Leadership Grant panelist. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your expertise in one of the categories of funding for libraries and/or museums.

This handbook provides instructions for panel review and is intended to help ensure fair and candid review of all eligible applications. It will provide you with the procedural information you need. Please use it in conjunction with this year's *National Leadership Grants Guidelines*, available online at: <http://www.ims.gov/applicants/grants/nationalLeadership.shtm>.

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

## National Leadership Grant Summary

The National Leadership Grant (NLG) program supports projects that have the potential to elevate museum, library, and archival practice. Successful proposals will have national impact and generate results—new tools, research models, services, practices, or alliances—that can be widely adapted or replicated to extend the benefit of federal investment and that increase community access and participation. IMLS seeks to fund projects that have the following characteristics:

- *National Impact*—Proposals should address key needs and challenges that face libraries, museums, and archives.
- *Innovation*—Proposals should demonstrate a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the project area, and show how the project will advance the state of the art library, museum, and archival practice.
- *Collaboration*—While partners are not required in all NLG categories, IMLS has found that involving carefully chosen partners with complementary competencies and resources can create powerful synergies that extend project impact.

Project categories include:

- *Advancing Digital Recourses*—Support the creation, use, presentation, and preservation of significant digital resources as well as the development of tools to enhance access, use, and management of digital assets.
- *Research*—Support projects that have the potential to improve museum, library, and archival practice, resource use, programs, and services.
- *Demonstration*—Support projects that produce a replicable model or practice that is usable by other institutions for improving services and performance.
- *Library-Museum Collaboration*—Support collaborative projects that address the educational, economic, cultural and social needs of a community.

Project types include:

- Project Grants
- Planning Grants – Level 1
- Planning Grants – Level 2

## **The National Leadership Grants Process At-A-Glance**

1. Applicants submit proposals to IMLS through Grants.gov.
2. IMLS checks received applications for eligibility and completeness.
3. IMLS chooses qualified panelists with appropriate expertise.
4. Panelists independently evaluate assigned applications.
5. Panels meet as a group to discuss proposals and make recommendations to IMLS.
6. IMLS program staff analyzes panelist scores and comments, and decide which applications move forward for further consideration.
7. IMLS chooses qualified Overview Panel members with appropriate expertise.
8. Overview Panelists evaluate assigned applications and send scores and comments to IMLS.
9. Overview Panel meets as a group to discuss applications and make funding recommendations.
10. IMLS Director considers recommendations from panels and program staff, and makes final funding decisions.
11. Awards are announced on the IMLS website
12. IMLS staff notifies successful applicants.
13. IMLS provides feedback to all applicants.

## **Time Requirements for Reviewing Applications**

Experienced reviewers estimate that it takes two to three hours to evaluate one application. If you are a first time IMLS panelist, you may need more time. We recommend the reviewing process outlined in this handbook.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

Before IMLS assigned proposals for you to read, we provided you a list of applicants and asked you to identify any conflicts of interest. Once you begin reviewing your assigned applications, if you discover any previously unidentified potential conflict, contact IMLS immediately. Once you have reviewed an application, you should *never* represent the applicant in dealings with the IMLS or other Federal agencies in regard to this grant application or award.

## **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.

## **Application Completeness**

If any application appears to be incomplete, contact the appropriate IMLS Program Officer.

## **Using Two Online Systems**

This year, National Leadership Grants panelists will use two different online systems. Both systems require Internet access. These systems are:

- A file sharing system from which to download proposals and other documents you need to perform your work.
- A system to enter your evaluative comments and overall score for each proposal. (See Appendix 2)

Please review the following information about each of these two online systems.

### *Accessing Proposals to Read*

In the past, IMLS has mailed panelists a package containing paper instructions and a CD-ROM containing copies of their assigned proposals. This year we are testing a new method of delivering all panelist materials to you electronically, via a new "IMLS Applications Online System". You did not receive a package in the mail with this information. Instead, you received an email from IMLS with instructions for logging in and downloading all of your assigned proposals and other documentation (including this handbook). Please note that this is not a system for you to evaluate the proposals online, this is a new system designed only for delivering the necessary documents to you.

### *Evaluating Proposals*

You will evaluate your assigned proposals using the "Online Reviewer System" maintained by IMLS. Instructions on logging in and using this system are included as Appendix 2 in this handbook.

## **Deadline for Completing Your Reviews**

All of your evaluations in the IMLS Online Reviewer System must be completed by midnight (EST) on Sunday, **April 24, 2011**. We need you to meet this deadline so that we will have your reviews before the meeting and have them organized for the panel discussion.

## **Reading Applications**

Your thorough reading and understanding of each application will be the key to providing both insightful comments and an overall rating for the applicant and your thoughtful participation in the panel meeting discussions.

Your IMLS Program Officer is available to help you with specific questions or concerns you may have about any aspect of a particular project, such as a specific budget problem, understanding a proposed activity, structuring your evaluation comments, etc.

## **Evaluating Applications**

For each proposal you review, you will be asked to provide evaluative comments on how well the proposal addresses each of six criteria (see Appendix 1), and then provide a single overall numeric score for the proposal.

Your slate of assigned proposals may consist of a mix of the following types of applications:

- Full project proposals requesting up to \$1,000,000;
- Level I Collaborative Planning Grant proposals requesting up to \$50,000;
- Level II Collaborative Planning Grant proposals requesting up to \$100,000.

The differences in each of these types of proposals are explained in the program guidelines, online at <http://www.ims.gov/applicants/grants/nationalLeadership.shtm>.

As you evaluate and score this year's applications, please keep in mind the intended characteristics of National Leadership Grants (listed earlier in this handbook) and the stated review criteria for these applications (listed in the following section).

### *Preparing Evaluative Comments*

Generally, in completing evaluations for each proposal in the IMLS Online Review System, you will evaluate each proposal according to six criteria listed in the program guidelines:

- Assessment of Need
- National Impact and Intended Results
- Project Design and Evaluation Plan
- Project Resources: Budget, Personnel, and Management
- Communication Plan (not required for Collaborative Planning Level I)
- Sustainability (not required for Collaborative Planning Levels I and II)

As you evaluate an application in each of these areas, please use as guidance the *Panel Review Criteria* provided as Appendix 1 in this handbook. These criteria and questions were derived from the information provided to applicants in the *National Leadership Grants Guidelines*.

The comments you provide in the IMLS Online Review System will go back to the applicant without editing from IMLS, although they may be edited by you after the discussion at the panel meeting. Your comments and those of other reviewers are the only written feedback the applicant will receive. Please be sure to state your views in a constructive manner. You should not hesitate to be critical and to point out any weaknesses, but be sure the tone does not block out

the message. Please consider the following tips as you prepare comments for each of the criteria you must address in your evaluation:

Some of the characteristics of good comments are:

- Presented in a constructive manner
- Concise, specific, easy to read and understand
- Specific to the individual applicant
- Reflect the professionalism of the reviewer
- Correlate with the numeric overall score that is given
- Acknowledge the resources of the institution
- Reflect the application's strengths and identifies areas for improvement

Remember: Successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to improve their awards or future applications!

In addition to the space provided in the Online Review System for comments about each of the six criteria, the system also provides an optional "Overall Comments" space where you may enter other comments not specific to any one of the six criteria.

### Assigning an Overall Numeric Score

After you have read, evaluated and provided written comments, we ask that you provide a single overall numeric score for the application that reflects your opinion of the proposal's overall quality and your recommendation of whether it should be funded this year.

The following rating scale should be used for this purpose. As you assign numeric scores, please make sure the numeric score you choose is supported by the evaluative comments you provided for the proposal. The numeric scores you may assign are:

**5 (Excellent)** – The applicant's response provides **excellent** support for each of the evaluation criteria through the proposed activities. It strongly demonstrates both innovation and the potential to significantly advance practice in museums, libraries, or archives. Scores of "excellent" should only be for the highest quality applications.

**4 (Very Good)** - The applicant's response provides **very good** support for each of the evaluation criteria through the proposed activities. Some minor flaws exist that may be readily rectified. Proposals with this score could still be funded as submitted, without required revisions.

**3 (Good)** - The applicant's response provides **good/adequate** support for each of the evaluation criteria. Projects with a "good" rating are submissions that are a good idea, but may need some revising before being strongly considered for funding.

**2 (Some Merit)** - The application shows **some merit** and could be revised and resubmitted, taking into consideration recommendations and feedback from reviewers. A rating of "some merit" indicates the submission is not ready to receive funding this year, but has the potential to be funded. This score

is to encourage the applicant to take your comments and suggestions in consideration and return with a revised proposal next year.

***I (Do Not Fund)*** - The **do not fund** score is for projects that you do not believe would ever be fundable as a National Leadership Grant because they do not demonstrate the characteristics required in this grant program. It may be a project fundable in another IMLS grant category.

As you assign an overall numeric score to each proposal, please remember:

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

## **Submitting Completed Reviews to IMLS**

Please complete and submit all completed evaluations in the IMLS Online Review System **before midnight (EST) on Sunday, April 24, 2011**. If you are having difficulty completing and submitting your reviews, please contact one of the following IMLS program staff:

Library reviews: Kathy Mitchell ([kmitchell@imls.gov](mailto:kmitchell@imls.gov))

Museum reviews: Tim Carrigan ([tcarrigan@imls.gov](mailto:tcarrigan@imls.gov))

## **At the Panel Meeting**

On the day of the panel meeting in Washington, DC, please plan to arrive at IMLS headquarters at 8:45 AM. IMLS is located at:

1800 M. St., NW  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20036

The panel will convene promptly at 9:00 AM.

We will have copies of each application available during the panel, and will provide you with electronic access to both the proposals and your individual evaluations of each proposal you reviewed. You may wish to bring along any supporting notes with you on the day of the panel in Washington DC. During the panel meeting, you will have a chance to revise your comments and scores based on panel discussion, if needed.

Among the documents you will download as part of your reviewer documentation, will be a spreadsheet that specifies the “lead” reader for each application to be discussed during your panel meeting. *You will be the designated lead reader for some of your assigned applications.* This simply means that when those proposals are discussed, you are the reader assigned to start the discussion by giving a brief synopsis of the project (no more than three minutes), and then relating your preliminary overall rating and concise reasons for that rating. After your synopsis and explanation of your own rating, the other assigned readers will each be given an opportunity

to explain their ratings and evaluations of the application. After all assigned readers have explained their ratings, other panelists will be given an opportunity to join the discussion.

When you are not leading the discussion you will be expected to provide any additional comments you have about the application after the leader has finished. Some applications will have consensus, others will evoke quite a bit of discussion. This is the reason we hold the panel meeting in person, to hear these differing views, and work through them. Such discussion will help IMLS identify the exemplary projects that meet the stated program goals.

### **After the Panel Meeting**

Keep your applications and a copy of your reviews until June 15, 2011 (in case of questions from IMLS staff).

- Maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review.
- After June 15, 2011, destroy or delete all copies of these documents in your possession.

**Thank You for Serving as a 2011 National Leadership Grants Panelist!**

# NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS PANELIST HANDBOOK

## Appendix 1: Panel Review Criteria

In the IMLS Online Review System you will provide comments for each of the six criteria below, but you will provide only ONE numeric score for each application. Consider the entire proposal, including supporting documentation, as you evaluate and score each application's strengths and weaknesses in the following areas.

<b>1. Assessment of Need</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is evidence provided that the applicant has identified an audience, performed a formal or informal assessment of its needs, is aware of similar projects completed by other institutions, and has developed the project and its goals as the best solution to answer those needs?</li><li>• If the project is a Research proposal, does it frame the project in the context of current research and explain what this project will contribute to the library, museum, and/or archive fields?</li></ul>
<b>2. National Impact and Intended Results</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To what degree does the project reflect an understanding of current issues related to library, archive, and/or museum services, creatively addresses issues facing museums and/or libraries of similar size or discipline, and envisions change in the field that could result from the project?</li><li>• To what degree is the project likely to have a far-reaching impact through results or products that serve multiple institutions and constituencies, or evidence that the project is of sufficient scope to effect systemic change within and across organizations?</li><li>• Is evidence provided that the project will create, implement, and document workable models that have the potential for successful, widespread adaptation where appropriate, or will produce far-reaching results?</li><li>• To what degree do the project processes or outcomes have potential applications in other settings and are made available so that others may adapt them for their own use?</li><li>• To what degree do potential benefits of the project outweigh its potential risks?</li><li>• For projects that involve building digital collections, software, or other technology products, in addition to the above criteria, is evidence provided that the project demonstrates interoperability and accessibility in its broadest context and potential for integration into larger-scale initiatives?</li><li>• For research projects, is evidence provided that the results will be generalizable and useful to the library, archive, and/or museum communities?</li></ul>
<b>3. Project Design and Evaluation Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the project propose efficient, effective, and reasonable approaches to accomplish its goals, objectives?</li><li>• Are the methodology and design appropriate to the scope of the project?</li><li>• Does the project use existing or emerging standards or best practices?</li><li>• Does the evaluation plan tie directly to project goals through measurable project outcomes, findings, or products?</li><li>• Will project evaluation provide reliable information on which to judge impact or base actions?</li></ul>

<p><b>4. Project Resources: Budget, Personnel, and Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a clear description of how the applicant will effectively complete the project activities through the deployment and management of resources including money, facilities, equipment, and supplies?</li> <li>• Does the applicant provide a cost-efficient, complete, and accurate budget that uses appropriate resources to fulfill any cost-sharing requirement?</li> <li>• Is evidence provided that project personnel demonstrate appropriate experience and expertise and will commit adequate time to accomplish project goals and activities?</li> <li>• If the project includes a partnership, is evidence provided that all partners are active contributors to and beneficiaries of the partnership activities?</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Communication Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent will the results, products, models, findings, processes, and benefits of this project be made transparent and accessible through effective communication channels to the museum, library, and/or archive fields, and to other professional organizations and communities, as appropriate?</li> <li>• To what extent will communities described in the needs assessment section benefit?</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent will the project's benefits continue beyond the grant period, either through ongoing institutional support of project activities or products, Web sites, and development of institutional expertise and capacity, or through broad long-term access to project products?</li> <li>• To what extent will the project lead to systemic change within the institution as well as within the museum, archive, and/or library fields?</li> <li>• For projects that produce digitized collections, software, information systems, and other technology tools, in addition to the above criteria, to what extent does the project plan address activities to preserve and sustain the resulting digital products? Proposals should identify who will own copyright on the digital products and describe any restrictions placed on collection or product use during and after the grant period. Plans for preservation and maintenance of collections or other products during and after the expiration of the grant period also should be described.</li> <li>• For research projects, to what extent will project findings, reports, and other research products be made broadly available to the library, archive, and/or museum communities, and enter into the knowledge base of the library, archive, and/or museum fields?</li> </ul>

**Application Overview**

You may use the Overall Comments box to share your **overall** impression of the application and any general comments that do not fall into one of the above categories.

**Overall Numeric Score**

Please provide ONE overall score for the entire application on the scale of 1-5. Please use the full range of scores to evaluate applications.

**Rating Scale**

**5** Excellent      **4** Very good      **3** Good/adequate      **2** Some merit      **1** Do not fund

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## Appendix 2: Using the Online Reviewer System

All reviewers will use the online review process. You will need internet access.

Listed below are the general steps for using the online reviewer system. We recommend that you review these steps before you start.

To start, all you need to do is go to:

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

- Your login is: the **e-mail address** that is on file with IMLS\*
- Your current password is: **password**

When you logon and create your user account, you will need to create a new password.

If you have questions about using this system, please contact one of the IMLS program staff listed on the front page of the Panelist Handbook.

When you have completed assigning scores and giving comments for each application assigned to you, you will submit the entire review to IMLS. Please complete and submit all reviews by April 24, 2011.

### Accessing the Online Review System

- Once you have logged into the system, an **E-Review Security** screen will appear. Read this page and click **OK**.
- After you have created a new password, your panel assignment will appear. To access the list of applications, click **VIEW**.
- Before you can begin to review any of the applications you must complete a Conflict of Interest Statement. If you have no conflicts of interest with any of the applicants on the list, you may click **Submit Conflict of Interests Statement** (bottom of page) and proceed. If you think that you may have a conflict of interest with an applicant, please contact your assigned IMLS Program Officer.
- Now you are ready to begin. You may click **REVIEW** beside any of the applications to begin.

**\*Note: IMLS staff encourages you to write your comments in a word processing program, such as Word, and then cut and paste your text into the online review system.**

- **Comments** and a **Numeric Score** must be submitted for each application. You must submit comments for each of the application **Review Criteria**, and be sure to save each comment by clicking **Save** before you move onto to the next **Review Criteria**. You will only need to provide one overall numeric score for each application you are assigned to review. Click **Application Overview** to submit an overall score. \*Note: **Funding Priorities** does not apply.

- Once you have completed an application review, you must click the **Save & Close** box at the bottom of the screen. This will return you to the **Applications List** and allow you to choose another application to review.

### **Revisiting Online Review**

- With your e-mail address and new password you are able to re-enter the online review system and complete or edit your reviews as often as needed.
- Once logged in, the Security screen will appear again. Click **OK**.
- Once your panel assignment appears, click **VIEW** in order to access the **Applications List** and proceed with the review process.

### **Completing Online Review**

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

### **Help FAQ's**

#### ***Background:***

This system was created several years ago with 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.

Here are some common user issues:

#### ***What web browser should I use?***

Since this was created several years ago by a Microsoft based web developer, Internet Explorer is the only reliable web browser. Unfortunately, Mac users and those using Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Camino, and Opera will most likely **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. We suggest that you write and save your comments in a word processing program, then once you get into Internet Explorer and the IMLS reviewer system you can cut and paste your remarks in the proper place.

#### ***Do any of the buttons for assistance work?***

No. Please contact the IMLS staff person listed in your packet for help if you have any problems.

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

Shortly after receiving your packet, try logging into the system and entering some practice remarks to get a feel for the set up and information display. Then, as your deadline approaches, you can focus on the substance of your reviews rather than the process of entering the information.

Test out the system early and try to do it between 9:00am and 5:00pm so we are available to assist you.