

## 2009 NATIVE AMERICAN ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

# FIELD REVIEWER HANDBOOK

**DEADLINE FOR ONLINE  
SUBMISSION OF REVIEWS IS  
5:00 P.M. EDT, TUESDAY,  
JUNE 16, 2009**

This is a strict deadline that is necessary to maintain a timely schedule for the second level of review. All field reviews must be in before we can begin preparing for the panel. Contact IMLS immediately if you encounter scheduling problems. Thank you!

*Before reading this Handbook, please look over the cover letter from Joyce Ray in your review packet. Check to see that all materials are included and that the applications assigned to you are on the enclosed CD. Contact Alison Freese at IMLS, 202-653-4665 or [afreese@imls.gov](mailto:afreese@imls.gov), to confirm that you have received them.*

Call or email Alison Freese, Senior Program Officer, at [202-653-4665](tel:202-653-4665) or [afreese@imls.gov](mailto:afreese@imls.gov), for assistance.

## **NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANT FIELD REVIEW**

Thank you for offering to serve as a Native American Library Services Enhancement Grant field reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- knowledge of and familiarity with Native American communities and their library services/information needs;
- education and training in library and information science;
- technical knowledge regarding computers, electronic information management, software, Internet, or digitization.

Previous reviewers have reported the following benefits from serving as an Enhancement Grant reviewer:

- Increased knowledge about the diversity and needs of tribal libraries;
- Awareness of the need for support of tribal libraries and an increased willingness to actively promote this need in tribal communities;
- Professional development and recognition from peers; and
- Increased knowledge of proposal writing and the grant making process.

The staff at IMLS has prepared this Handbook specifically for field reviewers to ensure fair and candid review of all eligible applications. It will provide you with the procedural and technical information you need. Please use it together with the *2009 Native American Library Services Grant Program Guidelines* included in your reviewer packet. Even if you are an experienced reviewer, you will need to refresh your memory and note any changes.

**--REMINDER--**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Suggested Four-Week Review Schedule</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Enhancement Grant Program</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Enhancement Grant Process</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Application Review Instructions</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Check contents</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Conflict of Interest</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Confidentiality</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Eligibility</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5. Application Completeness</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6. Qualities of a Good Proposal</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7. Review Guidelines and Read Applications</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Evaluate Applications</b>	<b>7</b>
• <b>Assign Scores: The “Start with 3” Method</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Sample Comments</b>	<b>9</b>
• <b>Constructive and Effective Comments</b>	<b>9</b>
• <b>Ineffective and Poor Comments</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Reviewer payment forms to be faxed to IMLS after review</b>	<b>13</b>

## SUGGESTED FOUR-WEEK REVIEW SCHEDULE

<b>WEEK 1</b>	Check application materials and call or email IMLS to confirm receipt	Read Enhancement Grant guidelines and Field Review Handbook	Test online review system; log in; create new password; review instructions; check conflict of interest	
<b>WEEK 2</b>	Evaluate applications: First read-through to understand range of responses	Write preliminary notes	Call IMLS with any questions on completeness, review process, etc.	
<b>WEEK 3</b>	Second careful and in-depth read-through	Write detailed comments for each evaluation criterion offline; cut and paste into online review system	Determine scores for all four evaluation criterion for all applications and make sure the scores reflect the comments	Provide thoughtful "Application Overview" comments for each application
<b>WEEK 4</b>	Continue Week 3 review activities			
<b>TUESDAY, JUNE 16: SUBMIT ONLINE NO LATER THAN 5:00 P.M. EDT</b>				

## THE ENHANCEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

The Enhancement Grant program provides federal grants through an annual competitive process. Enhancement Grant projects may enhance existing library services or implement new library services, particularly as they relate to the goals of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) listed below:

- expanding services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats, in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages;
- developing library services that provide all users with access to information through local, state, regional, national, and international electronic networks;
- providing electronic and other linkages between and among all types of libraries;
- developing public and private partnerships with other agencies and community-based organizations;
- targeting library services to help increase access and ability to use information resources for individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills; and
- targeting library and information services to help increase access and ability to use information resources for persons having difficulty using a library and for underserved urban and rural communities, including children from birth to age 17, from families with incomes below the poverty line (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget).

The services listed above are not in priority order and are of equal importance.

## THE ENHANCEMENT GRANT PROCESS

1. Applicants review the *Native American Library Services Enhancement Grant Program Guidelines* and submit proposals to IMLS.
2. IMLS receives the grant applications and checks them for eligibility and completeness.
3. IMLS identifies a pool of qualified field reviewers.
4. IMLS matches grant applications to field reviewers with appropriate expertise and assigns five reviewers to each application.
5. Field reviewers receive the applications, evaluate them, and submit their reviews to IMLS.
6. IMLS records the scores and then standardizes them in order to compensate for variations in reviewers' scoring stringency. IMLS then ranks the proposals based on these standardized field review scores from highest to lowest.
7. This ranking determines which applications are sent to a sitting review panel for a second level of review. The panel meets in Washington, DC, after the field review period. The panel makes final recommendations based on field review comments as well as their own expertise. IMLS also asks panel members to provide feedback about issues pertinent to this year's competition and about improving the Enhancement Grant program, the application, and the process.
8. IMLS reviews the financial/accounting information and budget forms of each potential grantee.

9. IMLS staff provides a list of applications recommended for funding to the Agency Director for approval. The IMLS Director makes final funding decisions.
10. IMLS awards the Enhancement Grants. The IMLS Director announces them in September. IMLS notifies all applicants by mail whether or not they have received an award. With their notification, all applicants receive copies of anonymous reviews. A list of grantees is sent to all participating reviewers.

## HOW ARE YOUR REVIEWS USED?

Your scores will determine the ranking of applications and those that are sent to the sitting panel for the second level of review.

For those applications that go to panel review, your reviews will provide the basis for that review, guiding panelists to the strong and weak aspects of the application. If a panel-reviewed application is not funded, your review comments, along with those of the panelists, will assist the applicant as they consider revisions for possible resubmission. For those applications that do not go to panel, field review feedback will be the only guide for applicants to decide whether and how to revise and resubmit their proposals.

## APPLICATION REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

This section of the handbook contains detailed information on how to review an Enhancement Grant application. **If you think that you may not be able to review every proposal you have received, do not begin the review process.** Instead, notify IMLS at once. Call or e-mail Alison Freese at 202-653-4665 or [afreese@imls.gov](mailto:afreese@imls.gov).

### 1. Check Contents of IMLS Package

If you have not already done so, check the contents of your package to be certain that all the items listed in the cover letter are included. Check the PDF files on the CD to be certain that the correct applications have been included. Contact IMLS right away if any of the items seem to be missing.

### 2. Conflict of Interest

Review your list of applications once again to see if there are any potential conflicts of interest. 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. If there is a potential conflict, contact IMLS immediately. Otherwise, the online review system will ask you to verify that you have no conflict of interest when you access your list of applications.

Once you have reviewed an application, you should **never** represent the applicant in dealings with IMLS or other federal agencies in regard to this grant application or award.

### 3. 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, even after the review period. **Contact IMLS if you have any questions concerning an application—do not contact an applicant directly.**

### 4. Eligibility

IMLS determines an institution's eligibility for Enhancement Grant funds. If you feel that a particular project does not meet the IMLS eligibility requirements for Enhancement Grants, please contact IMLS. Again, do **not** contact the applicant directly.

### 5. Application Completeness

If any application appears to be incomplete, do not penalize the applicant by assigning a low score. Instead, contact IMLS to confer about missing materials first.

**The following list is the order of the application components:**

- Face Sheet (SF-424s—Grants.gov standard federal form)
- Abstract
- Program Information Sheet
- Narrative
- Detailed Budget
- Summary Budget
- Budget Justification
- Specifications for Projects that Develop Digital Products (if applicable)
- Schedule of Completion
- Long-Range Plan
- List of Key Project Staff and Consultants
- Resumes for Key Project Staff and Consultants; Job Descriptions
- Indirect Cost Rate Agreement or Proposal (if applicable)
- Supporting documentation: letters of support, assessments, etc.

### 6. Qualities of a Good Proposal

A good Enhancement Grant proposal should:

- contain all requested items and documentation,
- describe a worthwhile project idea that will increase or improve library services to the Native American community,
- successfully address each evaluation criterion,
- demonstrate sound financial and project planning, and
- potentially serve as a model project for other tribal libraries.

## 7. Review Guidelines and Read Applications

Before reading your applications, read the Enhancement Grant guidelines—and the Application Evaluation Criteria in particular—in the *2009 Grant Program Guidelines* booklet (pp. 45-46) included in your packet. The bulleted items under each evaluation criterion represent the type of information you should look for in the applicant’s responses and should serve as guideposts for your review. A separate easy-reference rating guide listing the Enhancement Grant evaluation criteria is included in your review packet. Place this handout in your workplace where you can refer to it throughout the review process.

Read through all of your applications first to develop a feel for the range of responses. Experienced reviewers report that it takes two to three hours to evaluate a proposal. If you are a first-time Enhancement Grant reviewer, you may need more time.

***Budget review:*** Reviewers are not expected to thoroughly analyze proposal budgets for mathematical accuracy, allowable costs, or indirect cost rate issues. We ask instead that you conduct a general review of the budget for reasonable and adequate expenditures to ensure a successful project.

***Digitization review:*** If there is a digitization component to the project you review and you cannot analyze the technical aspects of the Specifications for Projects that Develop Digital Products, a general review of the merits of the digitization project will suffice.

## 8. Evaluate Applications

Read your applications again more thoroughly, paying close attention to content and detail. Take notes as you read and draft your comments for each of the four evaluation criteria as well as Application Overview comments. You can draft your comments on your computer, then cut and paste them into the review form. We are looking for detailed comments that will help each applicant improve their project. Brief, vague statements will not serve this purpose. Please see sample comments in this Handbook as examples of the depth of discussion that are most helpful to the applicants.

**A good review comment is at least *one paragraph in length* and analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal as it relates to the evaluation criterion in question. In a good comment, the reviewer will analyze the applicant’s entire response and provide feedback that is detailed and specific enough to provide concrete, constructive guidance to the applicant on how to improve the proposed project and also compliments the strengths of the approach and methods that are being proposed.**

As you formulate your comments, keep in mind the following guidelines for providing constructive comments:

- Comments should be addressed to the applicant and be specific to the individual proposal. Vague, general statements are not helpful.

- Comments should *analyze* the narrative section of the application; summarizing or paraphrasing the applicant’s own words will not help the applicant.
- Consider a project’s strengths *and* weaknesses; acknowledge and compliment strengths; offer practical suggestions for improving weaknesses.
- 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.
- Refrain from personal comments that are not directly related to your evaluation of the proposal. Such comments will be vetted and deleted before distribution to applicants.
- Consider whether the applicant has the resources to successfully complete the project.
- Comments should be easy to read and understand.

Remember that the panelists and IMLS staff use your comments to help unsuccessful applicants improve their future applications.

*See sample comments in the next section.*

## 9. Assign Scores: The “Start with 3” Method

- Finish drafting your narrative comments. Make sure that your comments accurately reflect your opinions.
- Assign preliminary scores to each narrative section. Use a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). Make sure that your scores accurately reflect your written comments.
- Use whole numbers only. Do not use fractions, decimals, zeros, or more than one number.
- Score all responses; do not leave any blank.

The definitions of the numerical scores are:

- 1 Response provides **insufficient** information for evaluation.
- 2 Response provides **inadequate** support for proposed project activities.
- 3 Response provides **adequate** support for proposed project activities.
- 4 Response provides **very good** support for proposed project activities.
- 5 Response provides **exceptional** support for proposed project activities and is a leadership model.

We suggest that you use the **Start with 3** method to assign scores. If all field reviewers adopt this same approach, Enhancement Grant panelists will see greater consistency in the use of our scoring definitions. If you have questions, please contact us.

- **3 = adequate (provides adequate support for project activities)**
- Consider a score of 3 to represent an adequate range of project feasibility— think of 3 as your starting point.
- Adjust up or down from 3 according to your written comments. If the project seems adequate or average (i.e., neither particularly strong nor particularly weak, but somewhere in the middle), retain the 3;
  - A little better than average, assign a 4;

- Much better than average, assign a 5;
- Minimally acceptable, drop down from a 3 to a 2;
- **Important: Reserve a score of 1 for what appear to be overall *extremely* poor projects and a score of 5 for *exceptionally* good projects.**
- Be fair and objective.
- Applications are not ranked by the raw score you assign but by the relative performance of each application compared to all others. Awarding only high scores will not benefit those applicants; awarding only low scores will not penalize those applicants.

<b>SAMPLE COMMENTS</b>
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**CONSTRUCTIVE AND EFFECTIVE COMMENTS:**

The following are characteristics of effective comments:

- 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 identifies areas for improvement
- Directed to applicants for their use

**EXAMPLES:**

**Criterion 1: Introduction and Assessment of Need**

- “The Assessment of Need clearly describes the current status of the educational, literacy, and cultural needs of at-risk tribal youth and the community that could be effectively addressed with viable tribal community/school library services and collections. The proposal also incorporates information from a library needs survey (though it is not noted how recently the survey was done). This section would be enhanced with the inclusion of more details from those survey results as they reflect specific needs of this community.” (presented in a constructive manner; concise and easy to understand)
- “A very thorough description of the community, including history, social issues, and demographics is provided. History and operations of the library are covered. Some current usage statistics—number of people with active library cards or who regularly use the library—would be helpful.” (constructive; concise)
- “The assessment of need adequately describes the tribe and its library. It would have been helpful, however, to have included the number of documents and materials that are in need of preservation and scanning. Also, the community survey and retreats were mentioned, but detailed information was not provided about the results of those

activities and how they relate to the library and this project specifically. However, it goes without saying how important the preservation of historical tribal documents and materials are to the tribe and our society as a whole.” (reflects the application’s strengths and identifies areas for improvement)

### **Criterion 2: Expected Outcomes and Project Goals**

- “The desire to accomplish all activities on this ambitious outline is understandable because it will provide new services to unreached people. However, the three tasks outlined—collection development, a computer lab, and a mobile lab—are major projects in themselves. The library, with its extremely limited resources and staff, should consider prioritizing these projects and tackling them progressively.” (specific to the individual applicant; constructive comment)
- “Digitization: The project design is clearly articulated with details. There is sufficient detail in the Specifications for Projects that Develop Digital Products about the digitization process and requirements. There are some details missing, such as the compression issues in regard to the TIFF files, however, there is enough detail to illustrate that they have considered different technical aspects of the digitization process. The dual goals of increasing access to the collection and preserving the original is well articulated. I was glad to read that they do address the storage issues for original materials. They will transfer and keep them in acid-free folders and boxes. There is a complete description of the source materials. The tribe has experience in developing and maintaining web sites. There are suggested outcome assessment techniques and a plan for documenting the results. It may not be a comprehensive assessment strategy but it is a very good start.” (specific to the individual applicant; reflects the strengths and identifies areas for improvement)

### **Criterion 3: Project Design and Required Resources**

- “Personnel, particularly management personnel, from the tribal office should be actively involved with the project. As such, they should be identified, their roles and reporting relationships described and their resumes attached. The librarian’s job description mostly specified a standard office manager and needs to be more specific as to library-related responsibilities. You will need a cataloger, a digital project manager and a children’s librarian all rolled into one person. This is a rare combination and you’ll be lucky to find such a person who can do everything you wish to accomplish with this proposal.” (specific to the individual applicant; identifies areas for improvement)
- “The budget is mostly cost effective except for the scanner and camera equipment. The prices listed suggest high-end professional equipment. In most instances, such equipment is unsuitable for use by any other than professionals, particularly when excellent results can be obtained with much less expensive equipment. In the preparation of this proposal, it would have been appropriate to name specific models of equipment and include published price lists or vendor bids. The archival software you refer to might also have been identified.” (directed to applicant for their use; presented in a constructive manner)

#### **Criterion 4: Evaluation Methods and Dissemination**

- “The applicant makes a strong case for what can be achieved in terms of diversity as well as library services when a community is drawn together through interagency cooperation. The long term effects—people wanting to work in libraries and to use libraries—is foreshadowed by the letters of library users and community groups.” (reflects strengths of the application)
- “The applicant describes in the narrative the positive impact that a librarian can have in this particular community, but does not describe how that impact will be measured or evaluated. To increase impact, the applicant may want to consider hosting sessions, programs, or displays that focus on the new materials purchased. As far as disseminating information on a local level about the impact of this project, writing an article announcing the receipt of the grant is good, but it would be better to publish articles throughout the duration of the funding period that describe, for example, how the additional materials are being used, or that they are available, as well as the increase in hours, etc.” (specific to the individual applicant; reflects strengths and provides suggestions for improvement)

#### **Application Overview/Additional Comments**

- This project contains the germ of a wonderful idea, the library consortium. Your awareness of the obstacles facing your remote region and of the possibilities presented by improved access to reading materials for economic, cultural, and educational purposes is compelling, and I believe, well grounded. Where you fall short is in tying your rationale for creating a library consortium to factual evidence of need and in playing out the implementation plan and evaluation design for your proposed project.
- The application is from a well-established library, and it is appropriate that there be new directions of service and access proposed by it. The needs assessment targeted substance abuse and health issues; the proposal would be strengthened with the inclusion of information from practitioners/research that clearly support the model proposed and with inclusion of appropriate partnerships to assist in the endeavors to address complex social issues, such as substance abuse.

#### **INEFFECTIVE AND POOR COMMENTS**

Vague, derogatory, or extraneous remarks are not helpful to either panelists or applicants. To avoid making poor comments:

- do not make derogatory remarks. Offer suggestions for improvement rather than harsh criticism.
- do not 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.

- do not offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information. Your comments should concern only the information IMLS requests of applicants.
- do not penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money. Any eligible institution may receive funds, regardless of need.

**EXAMPLES:**

- “The project is obviously attempting to make the work adaptable – good work.” (*Vague and unclear*)
- “Weakest part of the proposal. Could be strengthened.” (Vague, does not give suggestions for what and how to strengthen.)
- “I might question some parts of the budget, but they probably know what they’re doing.” (Not evaluative, vague, and irrelevant)
- “Addresses issues of digitization crucial to most cultural institutions.” (Does not address how those issues impact on the proposed project –vague)

## Reviewer payment forms to be faxed to IMLS after review

<p>Return these materials to IMLS by Fax</p>	<p>1. <b>After</b> you have finished your reviews, sign and fax the <b>Direct Deposit Sign-up Form</b> and the <b>Peer Reviewer Services Agreement</b> to Alison Freese at fax number <b>202-653-4601</b> in order to be paid for your services. An honorarium of \$200 is paid electronically. The Direct Deposit form must be completed in its entirety, <i>even if it was submitted in a prior year with the identical banking information.</i></p> <p>Should you decide to mail rather than fax these materials, please send to the following address:</p> <p>IMLS Attn: Alison Freese Native American Library Services 1800 M Street NW, 9th Floor Washington, DC 20036-5802</p> <p><b><i>If you fax your materials, you DO NOT need to send us the originals.</i></b></p>
<p><b>REMINDER</b></p>	<p><b>The deadline for Enhancement Grant reviews is 5:00 p.m. EDT, Tuesday, June 16, 2009. This is a strict deadline that is required in order to maintain a timely schedule for the second level of review. Contact IMLS immediately if you encounter scheduling problems.</b></p>
<p>Keep Copies Until October 1, 2009</p>	<p>Keep your applications and a copy of your review sheets until October 1, 2009 (in case of questions from IMLS staff).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review.</li> <li>• After October 1, 2009, <b>destroy all materials concerning the applications.</b></li> </ul>

**THANK YOU FOR SERVING AS  
AN ENHANCEMENT GRANT FIELD REVIEWER!**