



American Heritage Preservation Grants

2010 Field Reviewer Handbook

For information call IMLS
(202) 653-4674 or (202) 653-4635

OR email

chenry@imls.gov

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The American Heritage Preservation Program Review Process

Thank you for offering to serve as a American Heritage Preservation Grants (AHPG) field reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your professional experience in museums, libraries, or archives, as well as your strong understanding of conservation or collections care of objects in these institutions.

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 *American Heritage Preservation Grant Application and Guidelines*.

Even if you have reviewed for other IMLS programs, you should review this booklet since the American Heritage Preservation grant program differs from other programs in various ways.

Goals of the American Heritage Preservation grant program

The purpose of the American Heritage Preservation Grants (AHP) program is to raise awareness and fund preservation of treasures held in small and mid-sized museums, libraries and archives that convey the essential character and experience of the United States. These artifacts can be of diverse origin, but should have significance in the heritage of the community in which they are now held.

AHP grants are being offered as a special initiative under the Institute of Museum and Library Services' Conservation Project Support (CPS) grant program. The format has been streamlined for use by an expanded audience of IMLS eligible institutions to request funds for targeted conservation and preservation activities. Application review has also been streamlined for an expedited process.

Priority will be given to smaller institutions, but large libraries, archives and museums are also eligible to apply. Grants will provide funds to preserve specific items, including works of art, rare books, scientific specimens and historical documents (photographs, maps, deeds, etc.) that are in need of conservation. These funds are not intended to fund a small portion of a larger project, but are aimed at completing a stand-alone conservation project. Applicants will build on completed conservation assessments of their collections, to ensure that the American Heritage Preservation Grants go towards projects that represent best practices in the field and underscore the importance of assessment planning (Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) www.heritagepreservation.org/CAP/about.html grants, NEH Preservation Assistance grants (PAG) <http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/pag.html>, state grant programs, or other internal or external strategic assessments). All eligible institutions

may apply for projects in the following areas:

- Treatment of library, museum and archival collections
- Improvement of collections storage
- Environmental improvement of collections

Eligible Activities

The American Heritage Preservation Grants assist museums, libraries and archives with the preservation of specific items, including works of art, rare books, scientific specimens and historical documents (photographs, maps, deeds, etc.) that are in need of conservation and convey the essential character and experience of the United States. These artifacts can be of diverse origin, but have a significance in the heritage of the community in which they are now held.

All eligible institutions may apply for project activities in the three areas outlined below:

- Treatment of Library, Museum, or Archival Collections
- Improvement of Collections Storage
- Environmental Improvement of Collections

Allowable Expenses include, but are not limited to, such items as

- Treatment materials and supplies
- Collections storage materials such as acid-free boxes and folders, mylar sleeves
- Project personnel, contract, or in-house staff time necessary for the proper and efficient execution of the project
- Project consultants and their travel
- Repair and stabilization activities that are directly related to the project
- Micro-environments for an object, specimen, or room (e.g., storage)
- Basic environmental monitoring equipment and conservation supplies
- Educational materials (if an education component is applied for)

All proposed expenses must be justified in the application budget.

Ineligible Activities

Grant funds may not be used for

- Acquisition of collections
- Contributions to endowments
- Social activities, ceremonies, or entertainment
- Construction or major building improvements such as window

- replacement
- Replacement or renovation of historic sites and landscapes
- Pre-grant costs

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 conservation or collections 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.
7. IMLS staff reviews the financial/accounting information and the budget sheets of each potential grantee.
8. IMLS staff members provide a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director for her approval.
9. IMLS awards American Heritage Preservation grants in the end of February. At that time, IMLS notifies all applicants by mail whether or not they have received an award. With their notification, all applicants receive the comments that their field reviewers completed. We also send notification of the awards to all participating reviewers.

How Your Reviews Are Used

Successful applicants point to good scores and positive comments as a stamp of approval for their project proposals. Museum, library and archive administrators report that receiving IMLS awards enhance fundraising success with private foundations or state and local sources. Unsuccessful applicants may 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 AHPG program in February, 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 American Heritage Preservation grant program and are providing an invaluable service to the entire museum, library, and archives community. Thank you!

Application Review Instructions

First Steps

This section of the handbook contains detailed information on how to review an American Heritage Preservation grant program application. If you encounter any problems while undertaking your reviews, please contact an IMLS staff person:

Christine Henry
phone: (202) 653-4674
email: chenry@imls.gov

Mark Feitl
phone: (202) 653-4635
email: mfeitl@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 and 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. Once you sign into the online system, you will need to verify that you do not have any conflicts. 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 page 25 of the *2010 American Heritage Preservation Grants Application and Guidelines*. Additionally, an AHPG 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 four 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).

- Be brief. These reviews are meant to guide the applicant to improving their application. Often one or two sentences per section are sufficient.
- 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 institution.
- Acknowledge and compliment strengths.
- Consider a project's strengths *and* weaknesses; acknowledge and compliment strengths; offer practical suggestions for improving weaknesses.
- 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 AHPG proposal will demonstrate how the museum, library, or archive will preserve a specific item(s), including works of art, rare books, scientific specimens and historical documents (photographs, maps, deeds, etc.) that are in need of conservation and convey the essential character and experience of the United States. These artifacts can be of diverse origin, but have significance in the heritage of the community in which they are now held. The proposal will also discuss how the project will raise awareness of the objects and their care in the community.

Assign Scores

Assign preliminary scores to each of the 4 narrative sections using the scale below. The reviewer interface lists 7 scores, but this program only uses three scores with the definitions provided below.

2 = Lowest; 6 = Highest

The definitions of the numerical scores are:

SCORE DEFINITION

- 2 Applicant's response does not provide sufficient information to review, or describes inappropriate activities.
- 4 Applicant's response provides sufficient information. Project activities described are appropriate.
- 6 Applicant's response is exemplary, and provides detailed information for each question. Project activities described are excellent.

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 four 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: Please be brief in your responses.

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. For all questions about reviewing, either technical or programmatic, please contact IMLS staff at (202) 653-4789. Please **do not use the hotlink for technical assistance**, as this function has been disabled.

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.
- Complete your online reviews by **December 14, 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
- Correlate with the score that is given
- 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.

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.

Sample Comments

The following samples (pages 10-11) review should help you in structuring your comments. These are examples as they will appear when you print from our online system. Our online reviewer program requires each comment to be at least 30 characters long. We are asking that you keep your comments short (over 30 characters, but under 3 sentences per section).

Reviewer Material

Deadline	The Deadline to submit IMLS panel reviews via the online review interface is December 14, 2009 .
Keep Copies Until	Keep your applications and a copy of your review sheets until March 31, 2010 (in case of questions from IMLS staff). <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review.▪ After March 31, 2010, destroy the applications.

Thank you for serving as an AHPG Field Reviewer!



E - Review

[LOGIN | REVIEW GROUPS | REVIEWER APPLICATIONS | APPLICATION SCORES]

Application Review Report

Review Group : RG-IC-21-2009-FR-001

Log Number:IC-21-09-0888

Institution Name:ABC Museum

Funding:Yes

Priorities Met:

Overall Overall this is a good project and will serve the museum and the

Comments:community well

Criteria: *IC - Statement of Need*

Score: 6

Comments: This project is soundly based on the findings of their CAP survey from three years ago. It is a well thought out next step.

Criteria: *IC - Project design*

Score: 6

Comments: The narrative describes a thorough approach to rehousing this collection. The activities are well planned.

Criteria: *IC - Project Resources: Time, Personnel, Budget*

Score: 4

Comments: The proposed time line on this project is a bit tight. The museum may not be able to accomplish this project in 4 months.

Criteria: *IC - Impact*

Score: 6

Comments: This project will have a significant impact on the local community.

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E - Review

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Application Review Report

Review Group : RG-IC-21-2009-FR-001

Log Number:IC-21-09-0888

Institution Name:ABC Museum

Funding:Yes

Priorities Met:

Overall Overall this application needs more details to be able to determine if the

Comments:project will be successful for the institution.

Criteria: *IC - Statement of Need*

Score: 2

Comments: The museum has not yet done any sort of assessment, internal or otherwise. The application has not addressed how this project fits with the needs of the collection.

Criteria: *IC - Project design*

Score: 2

Comments: There is no information provided as to how this project will be carried out. It is unclear if the museum will undertake the work, or will use the consultant that is only briefly mentioned.

Criteria: *IC - Project Resources: Time, Personnel, Budget*

Score: 4

Comments: The project timeline and budget are reasonable for what they are trying to accomplish, but there was not much information on the consultant who will carry out the project.

Criteria: *IC - Impact*

Score: 2

Comments: The impact of the project has not been well described. It is hard to discern how it will be shared in the community, or if it will be shared at all.

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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 2, 4, 6 discussed on page 6 of this booklet.

2. Is digitization an allowable cost?

Generally no. It may be part of the larger project as long as the focus of the application is the preservation or conservation of the physical collections, but digitization cannot be the main project activity.

3. 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?

Yes, while all museums, libraries, and archives that meet IMLS eligibility criteria may apply for an American Heritage Preservation Grant, priority will be given to small to mid-sized institutions.

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. But often, the question can be answered in one or two well crafted sentences. Do not feel compelled to fill the entire space in the online review system.

9. 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.