

Timed Transcript for IMLS National Medal for Museum and Library Service Nominee Information Session

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Welcome to the IMLS National Medal for Museum and Library Service Nominee Information session.

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My name is Mark Feitl, and speaking on behalf of the rest of the staff at IMLS,

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We're thrilled to know that you are interested in the National Medal for Museum and Library Service program.

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In this presentation, we'll be addressing the following topics: the history of the program and the program overview; the eligibility review, what types of museums and libraries can be nominated; the nomination process, including nomination components.

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We'd like to note that this is the first year in which the nomination must be submitted through a web-based form on the IMLS website.

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We'll go over important dates; the review process; nomination tips; online information and resources; and we'll end with some IMLS staff contact information.

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The National Medal for Museum and Library Service program has been in existence for over 25 years. In that time, over 200 libraries and museums have received the award.

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The program recognizes museums and libraries that make significant and exceptional contributions to their communities; those that demonstrate extraordinary and innovative approaches to community service.

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The National Medals Program recognizes outstanding libraries and museums of all types and sizes that deeply impact their community by fostering a lifelong passion for learning for all people,

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Nourishing curiosity and imagination from early childhood through adulthood, for people of all abilities and needs;

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By providing access to information through advancing digital capacity, focusing on digital inclusion and access to digital and informational resources, including e-books and materials to help address workforce development and public health;

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By transforming the lives of community members by being trusted community spaces for convening, connection, and conversation; enlightenment and shared thoughts and opinions; and preserving natural and cultural heritage and community memory;

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And by continuing to engage their communities during the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic and enhanced focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, through providing information, programming, and services virtually,

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Or taking innovative and imaginative steps toward continuing services and re-opening their physical spaces.

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To learn more about the museums and libraries who have previously been selected to receive the National Medal since 2000, please refer to the link in the slide above.

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Let's begin with the eligibility requirements for museums.

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In general, these types of museums are eligible to apply to the Medals program:

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Aquariums, arboretums and botanical gardens, art museums, children's and youth museums, general museums, historic houses and sites, history museums, natural history and anthropology museums, nature centers, planetariums, science and technology museums, specialized museums, and zoos.

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And in order to meet all eligibility criteria, museums must be either a unit of state or local government, or be a private, non-profit organization that has tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code.

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Must be located in one of the 50 states of the United States of America, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands,

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The Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau.

4:01

They must also have professional staff; be organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes; own or use tangible objects,

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Either animate or inanimate; and they must care and exhibit these objects to the general public on a regular basis through facilities that it owns or operates.

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This generally means being open to the public for at least 120 days a year.

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Finally, previous museum medal recipients may be nominated again after 10 years.

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Now, let's review the eligibility requirements for libraries, which can include: academic and research libraries and archives, digital libraries, library associations, library consortia, public libraries, research libraries and archives that make information available to the public and that are not an integral part of an institution of higher learning,

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Public school libraries, tribal libraries, and private or special libraries that are considered libraries as determined by the State in which they are located.

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The library should also be either a unit of state or local government, or be a private non-profit organization that has tax-exempt status for the Internal Revenue Code.

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Finally, like museums, they must also be located in one of the 50 States of the United States of America, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S.

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Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau.

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And as stated in the previous slide about museums, library medal recipients may be nominated again after 10 years.

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Here are details about the nomination process.

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Anyone can nominate a library or museum for the National Medal.

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This may include an organization's employees, board members, volunteers, members of its community, and elected officials.

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If someone outside the organization wants to make a nomination, they should notify the museum or library directly and ask them to complete and submit the nomination form.

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Many libraries and museums are nominated by their elected officials; their congressional representatives and senators.

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Regardless of who initiates the nomination, the museum and library must still complete the nomination form on the IMLS website.

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Organizations who fail to complete this form and include all required documentation will not be considered for a National Medal.

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For the first time in the history of this program, the nomination form is entirely online through a fillable form on the IMLS website.

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It can be accessed by going to the link referenced in this slide.

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This form must be completed by the nominated organization.

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There are four components of the National Medals nomination form.

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The first component collects information about the organization as a whole.

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It includes the organization's legal name, address, DUNSnumber, TIN/EIN number, organization type, staff information, contact information, and questions concerning the organization's financial situation and operating expenses.

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The next component asks for the nominating organization to provide a summary of their history, mission, and statement of purpose.

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It also asks you to explain why you believe your organization deserves to win the National Medal for Museum and Library Service.

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The third component is the nomination narrative.

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It has four sections, and they are: Community and Community Needs; Programs and Services; Impact; and Financial Sustainability.

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It's important to note that the Sections B and C have word limits, so you need to plan well to cover all the relevant information that is being requested.

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The final component is where you upload your letters of support.

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Ideally, these letters should come from community members who have direct knowledge of your organization's community service and the particular programs you identified in the nomination.

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We recommend that the letters come from different segments of the broader community served by the organization and from individuals who have either witnessed or experienced first-hand a particular program or service.

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In addition to the three letters of support, letters from members of Congress are welcome.

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They may be uploaded with your nomination form or e-mailed to nationalmedals -- one word -
- at IMLS dot gov.

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Letters should be addressed to the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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Let's spend a little time going into more detail about the nomination narrative. This is the most important part of the nomination form, so it's important to get this right.

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There are four sections to the National Medals nomination narrative.

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As stated in the previous slide, they are: Community and Community Needs, Programs and Services; Impact; and Financial Sustainability.

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The first section, Community and Community Needs, is where you will describe your community, including its demographics;

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Here you will describe your community's major needs and how you identified them, and in what ways does your staff work with the community?

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The next section, Programs and Services, is where you will describe the specific programs and services that have been developed to address one or more of those needs identified in the previous section.

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It also asks you to provide a brief description of your full portfolio of programs and services;

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How have you constructed community partnerships to increase your ability to connect with targeted population groups within your community;

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And how you serve community members of all abilities.

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The third section is Impact.

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It is here where you will describe the impact of your organization's programs and services on the identified community need. You'll want to be specific, using qualitative, quantitative, or both types of descriptors as appropriate.

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This section also asks how your organization tracks the cumulative impact of its programs and services, and how your organization uses this data to inform continuing and/or new programs and services.

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The final section, Financial Sustainability, is where you have an opportunity to list your organization's three primary sources of revenue, and where you can describe how your organization financially supports the programs and services as discussed in the previous sections.

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You can also describe your organization's funding model and if it is sustainable to continue to enable your programs and services.

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Finally, you can identify any private or non-profit groups that support your organization's mission and activities and describe the extent of their support.

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A common question IMLS staff receive from nominees is whether we can review draft narratives.

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Unfortunately, we do not review draft nominations; we simply do not have the staff capacity to offer that service to all potential nominees.

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A word on Letters of Support. Though the narrative is the most important and largest component of the nomination form,

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Letters of Support are a vital element and a great way to convey your organization's impact on your communities.

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You must submit at least one letter of support, and a maximum of three non-Congressional letters of support can be submitted.

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As mentioned in a previous slide, these letters should come from community members who have direct knowledge of the nominated organization's community service and

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the particular programs identified in the nomination. Based upon previous years, nominations that included powerful, poignant, genuine letters of support did the best job of supporting the nomination.

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Those that included letters from a board member, or the local Chamber of Commerce, or letters that had no reference to the programs and services identified in the narrative, tended to do poorly.

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Remember, your organization's programs and services should make significant and exceptional contributions to your communities.

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Your letters of support can convey these contributions in a very personal and meaningful way.

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Now, we want to remind you of important dates for the Medals nominations.

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Nominations are due by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on November 2, 2020.

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The deadline is non-negotiable, so it's a good idea to start the process early, and, if possible, submit early.

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The Medals winners will be announced in the Spring of 2021.

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So what happens after the deadline passes and all of the nominations have been received? All nominations from eligible museums and libraries that are complete and submitted on or before the deadline will be reviewed.

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The Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, with the advice of the National Museum and Library Services Board, selects the recipients of the National Medals.

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One additional note, 15 libraries and 15 museums will be chosen as finalists, for a total of 30.

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From these finalists, three museums and three libraries will then be selected to receive National Medals.

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At this point, we'd like to share with you some tips that will hopefully help you submit a strong nomination form.

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These are the high-level recommendations that we have been sharing with nominees for years, and though they may seem obvious, it's worth discussing them in a bit more detail.

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As we've already mentioned, we encourage you to start the nomination process early.

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It's important to be reflective about what is being asked of you in the nomination form and to bring all the relevant people at your organization together in a common voice.

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The nomination process should not be done in a vacuum.

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Those nominations that tend to do well are those that involve people throughout the museum or library.

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Starting early allows you to meet with the people who work directly in your community and those creating and implementing the programs and services that may be the focus of your nomination.

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This brings us to the next tip --

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How you write your narrative.

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We strongly encourage you to respond to all sections of the narrative --Remember, there are four sections --

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And to answer each question as stated. Nominations that include unstructured and rambling narrative responses tend not to do well.

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As covered a few slides back, it is very important to submit strong letters of support which should link to the narrative in some meaningful way, A heartfelt letter from someone who has directly benefited from the community services and programs that your organization provides can be a game changer.

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Another tip is to have someone not intimately familiar with your organization's programs and services, and the National Medals program, read the nomination components before submitting the form.

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If your nomination responses make sense to your neighbor or your reading club member, in terms of the Medals program goals, then you probably did a good job clearly articulating your responses.

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Finally, there are dedicated staff at IMLS who are ready to answer any questions you may have.

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Contact information will be available on an upcoming slide, and the same information can be found on the National Medals landing page on the IMLS website at the link on this slide.

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We would also like to share some links as a handy reference for information about the National Medals program.

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The first link takes you to the National Medals landing page.

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The second link takes you directly to the online nomination form.

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The third link takes you to a page with lots of information from past award cycles, including blog posts, videos, publications, press releases, and other information that may be of interest.

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You may want to consider bookmarking these links for easy access.

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Once again, we want to share with you the IMLS staff contacts.

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Feel free to reach out to us with any questions you may have about the program or the nomination process.

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We look forward to hearing from you with any questions over the next few weeks, and of course, to seeing your nomination on or before November 2, 2020.

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Good luck!