

## Panel Review Instructions

### Museums for America – Museums Empowered

#### What to Expect

- You will access the applications assigned to you by clicking on a link provided in an email message from your IMLS primary contact.
- You will enter one whole-number score and one set of comments for each application through the IMLS Online Reviewer System.
- You will use a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).
- You must write a constructive and substantive comment of between 30 and 2000 characters in length for each criterion—Goals, Implementation, and Results—and for summary remarks in Application Overview.
- You should address your comments to the applicant, not to IMLS.
- Your comments and the numeric score you provide for the application should align with each other.

#### Step-by-Step Instructions

##### 1. Verify Access to Applications

Use the link provided to you in an email message from your IMLS primary contact to access the entire group of applications that your panel will review along with the field review comments and scores for each application. **The same email message included a list of applications assigned specifically to you.** Save at least the applications assigned to you (and more if you wish) and associated field reviews to your computer in a secure place that is not accessible to others. Call or email your IMLS primary contact immediately if any applications are missing or if you cannot open them.

**Confidentiality in IMLS Peer Review:** 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.

##### 2. Verify Access to the IMLS Online Reviewer System

Use the following link to verify that you have access to the IMLS Online Reviewer System:

<https://www.ims.gov/grants/become-reviewer/reviewer-resources/museum-reviewer-resources>

Then scroll to the bottom of the page to “Review Online,” and click on the link to access the Online Reviewer System Login.

To log in, enter the email address you have on file with IMLS, and use the default password: **password**. An **E-Review Security Screen** will appear. Read this page and click **OK**. Next, create a user account and establish your own password.

### Technology Issues (See also the Appendix of this document.)

**Browsers:** Microsoft Internet Explorer® is the only reliable Web browser that will successfully work with the IMLS Online Reviewer System. Unfortunately, the system is not fully compatible with Mac or Microsoft Vista operating systems nor with browsers such as Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Camino, or Opera.

**Compatibility View Settings:** If you are using Internet Explorer® and experience difficulty in viewing the text in the IMLS Online Reviewer System, try adding [www.ims.gov](http://www.ims.gov) to Compatibility Views under “Tools.”

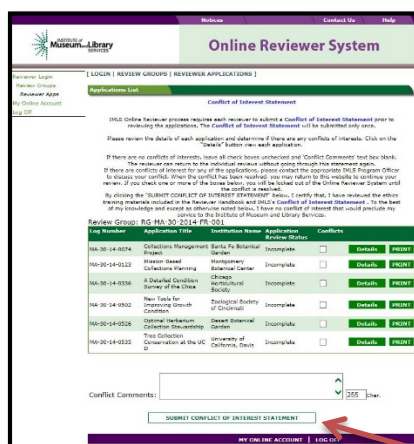
**Passwords:** There is no need to remember or rediscover a password you may have created in prior years. We reset all passwords for the IMLS Online Reviewer System to the default at the end of each review cycle, and so all reviewers must use the default to establish new accounts. If at any time during the review process you forget the password you created, call or email your IMLS primary contact to reset your password to the default.

### 3. Assess Potential Conflicts of Interest

After you have created a new password, click **REVIEW GROUPS**, and your review assignment will appear. To access the list of applications assigned to you, click **VIEW**.

Read through your list of applications again to see if there are any potential conflicts of interest. Please see [“Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest.”](#)

**CAUTION:** Depending on your computer’s operating system and/or the browser you use, you *may* see a screen with a column labeled “Conflicts” with a checkable box by each application. **Do not check any of these boxes** as doing so will disable access to the system and make it impossible for others in your review group to do their work. Instead, call or email your IMLS primary contact immediately if you have a conflict, or what may appear to be a conflict.



If you have no conflicts of interest with any of the applicants on the list, click **SUBMIT CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT** at the bottom of page.

#### 4. Read Applications

Revisit the Museums Empowered Notice of Funding Opportunities at <https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/museums-empowered-professional-development-and-capacity-building-opportunities> . Then read the applications, keeping in mind the review criteria for each section of the narrative. You will not need to reference each bullet point in your comments, but these questions should guide your thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of each application.

##### **About Performance Measurement**

On the Program Information Sheet (Section 4), applicants were required to select at least one pre-determined performance goal that reflects a measurable change or outcome they intend their project to achieve. All Museums Empowered applicants were instructed to select the IMLS agency-level goal for Learning and check the box for the performance goal “Train and develop museum and library professionals.” This performance measure statement is associated with specific information that they will be required to collect during the grant period and report at the end of their projects.

These pre-determined performance goals statements will help IMLS document the collective achievements of the projects we fund, and they may be found here: <https://www.imls.gov/performance-measure-statements-and-information-learning-and-community-projects>. Elements that you as a reviewer will evaluate in the Project Impact section of each application relate directly to performance goal(s) and performance measure statement(s).

#### 5. Draft Comments

You must write a constructive and substantive comment for each of three criteria for each application you review. All three criteria have equal weight and are equally important in identifying the overall strengths and weaknesses of an application.

To organize notes for writing your comments, you may use the “[Panel Review Notes Template](#)” to record notes that will help you prepare your review comments. Your final review comments should be written in complete sentences and constitute strong, coherent, constructive, and substantive assessments of the application. As you think about the review criteria, be sure to consider all the required components of the application as well as relevant Supporting Documents as resources for your evaluation. Draft your comments using a word-processing program for later copying and pasting into the IMLS Online Reviewer System. Remember that each comment must be between 30 and 2000 characters long.

When drafting your comments ...

- use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively;

- judge the application on its own merits, and do not base your evaluation on any prior knowledge of an institution; and
- if you question the accuracy of any information, call us—not the applicant—to discuss it.

Effective comments ...	Poor comments...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are presented in a constructive manner.</li> <li>• are both substantive and easy to read and understand.</li> <li>• reflect the resources of the institution.</li> <li>• are specific to the individual application.</li> <li>• reflect the numeric score assigned.</li> <li>• highlight the application’s strengths and identify areas for improvement.</li> <li>• are directed to applicants—not IMLS or panel reviewers—for their use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simply summarize or paraphrase the applicant’s own words.</li> <li>• make derogatory remarks.</li> <li>• penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money.</li> <li>• offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information.</li> <li>• make vague or overly general statements.</li> <li>• question an applicant’s honesty or integrity.</li> </ul>

***Make sure your comments justify the scores you provide. A highly complementary comment does not “remove the sting” of a low score, and a negative comment does not “even out” a high one. Comments and scores must complement each other and make sense as a whole.***

Below are some examples of **effective** panel reviewer comments:

Goals	
<p>“You clearly identify a critical need among the staff of your museum. The professional development activities are part of a comprehensive strategy designed to strengthen the capacity of the institution. Your intended results are achievable within the project time period and incorporate current research and best practices. The proposed project is an excellent fit for the Museums Empowered special initiative.”</p>	<p><i>Comment is substantive, addresses the review criteria, and employs a positive tone.</i></p>
<p>“You make a strong case for the need to develop new curriculum for K-12 audiences visiting the museum and have identified partnerships with the local school district. However, I could not find any supporting material about how this project would build the internal capacity of the museum through professional development for museum staff – and therefore this project does not meet the goals of the Museums Empowered special initiative.</p> <p>This project more closely matches the goals of the Museums for America – Learning Experiences grant program and you may want to consider submitting an application to the MFA program in a future year.”</p>	<p><i>Comment correlates with the score of 1 and makes implementable suggestions for securing funding.</i></p>

<b>Implementation</b>	
<p>“Your work plan is clear and outlines specific activities necessary for achieving your goals. The training programs for museum staff on evaluation tools, strategies and techniques are customized to address a specific audience need. You might consider adding a few iterations of each training program to explore its potential for adaptation to a variety of audiences.”</p>	<p><i>Comment provides a constructive assessment of the application and suggestions likely to benefit the applicant.</i></p>
<b>Results</b>	
<p>“You program evaluation will yield specific and measurable results about the impact of the professional development and training program on museum staff. The focus on change management and succession planning supports the core issues identified in your needs assessment. The revised strategic plan, built upon a solid core of staff training and development, will result in a more resilient museum that can respond to the changing needs of your community. I would have liked to have seen more plans for sharing your work beyond posting your new strategic plan on the website.”</p>	<p><i>Comment addresses questions from the review criteria.</i></p>

In contrast, below are some examples of **poor** panel reviewer comments:

<b>Goals</b>	
<p>“The museum plans to organize a symposium on the topic of after-school programs in art museums that will bring together museums professionals to discuss best practices. They will partner with the Parks and Recreations Department, the Boys and Girls Club, and other after school providers.”</p>	<p><i>Comment paraphrases the applicant’s own words.</i></p>
<b>Implementation</b>	
<p>“The work plan would be improved by putting in more time onsite.”</p>	<p><i>Comment is very brief, vague, and has little value to the applicant.</i></p>
<p>“One suggestion is that you have a discussion about what the term ‘key deliverable’ means. Usually it pertains to a physical product rather than a nebulous goal or objective.”</p>	<p><i>Comment does not provide useful feedback.</i></p>
<b>Results</b>	
<p>“The plan, staffing, and external reviewers indicate a good possibility of success.”</p>	<p><i>Comment is very brief and has little worth or value to the applicant.</i></p>

The chart below summarizes the most frequently asked questions from reviewers:

Should I consider ...?	Yes	No
Whether a project helps the organization advance its strategic plan	X	
An institution's financial or staffing needs		X
Whether the applicant has included all the information necessary for an adequate evaluation of the project's merits	X	
Whether an application is new or a resubmission		X
The size or age of the applicant organization		X
The applicant organization's indirect cost rate		X

## 6. Assign Scores

Assign a single preliminary score to each application. Use a scale of 1 to 5, as described below.

SCORE DEFINITIONS	
<b>5 – Excellent</b>	The applicant's response is outstanding and provides exceptional support for the proposed project.
<b>4 – Very Good</b>	The applicant's response provides solid support for the proposed project.
<b>3 – Good</b>	The applicant's response is adequate but could be strengthened in its support for the proposed project.
<b>2 – Some Merit</b>	The applicant's response is flawed and does not adequately support the proposed project.
<b>1 – Inadequate/Insufficient</b>	The applicant's response is inadequate or provides insufficient information to allow for a confident evaluation.

## 7. Review Your Work

Review your draft comments and preliminary scores. A review with a missing score or even one missing comment cannot be accepted by the IMLS Online Reviewer System. Adjust your scores, if necessary, to reflect more accurately your written evaluation. Scores should support comments, and comments should justify scores.

## 8. Enter Your Scores and Comments

Return to the IMLS Online Reviewer System at

<https://www.imls.gov/grants/become-reviewer/reviewer-resources/museum-reviewer-resources>

Then scroll to the bottom of the page to “Review Online,” and click on the link to access the Online Reviewer System Login.

Log in with the email address you have on file with IMLS and the password you created in Step 2. Go to your list of assigned applications and click **REVIEW** beside any of them to begin.

Copy and paste your comments into the appropriate blue blocks for each section of the narrative for each application. Be sure to save each comment by clicking **SAVE** at the bottom of the page before you move on to the next one. After entering comments for all three review criteria, go to the **Application Overview** section and choose a numeric score between 1 and 5 from the **SCORE** dropdown menu. You must enter a summary comment in this section for the system to accept your score. Use the controls on the side or top of the screen to navigate between sections.

**NOTE:** “Funding Priorities Addressed” is not relevant. You may simply ignore the radio button.

Once you have completed assigning a score and providing comments for each application assigned to you, print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files. Then click on **AM READY TO SUBMIT THIS REVIEW TO IMLS** to send all your work to IMLS. At this point, you will not be able to re-enter the IMLS Online Reviewer System unless you notify your IMLS primary contact.

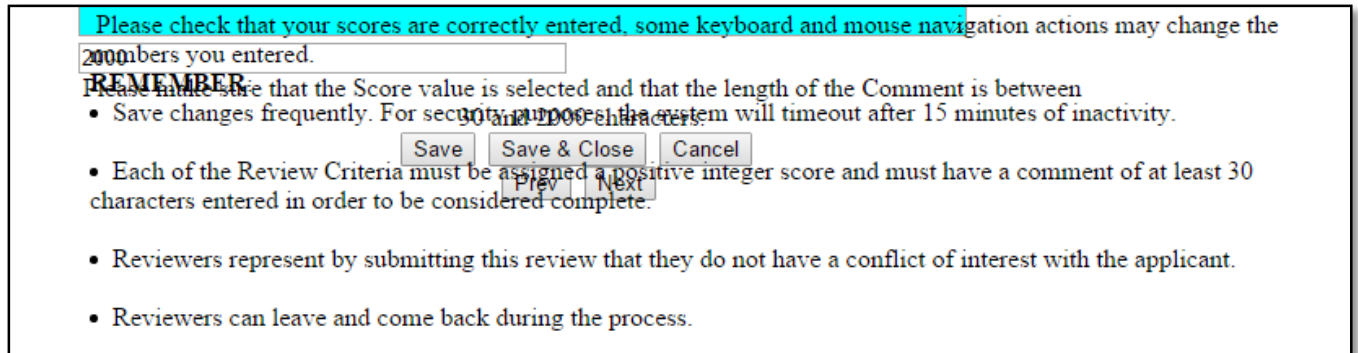
***For all questions about reviewing, either technical or programmatic, please call or email your IMLS primary contact directly.***

## 9. Manage Your Copies

Keep your applications and a copy of each review sheet until **September 30, 2017**, in case there are questions from IMLS staff. Continue to maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review by keeping electronic and paper copies in a secure place. After September 30, 2017, destroy the applications and the review sheets.

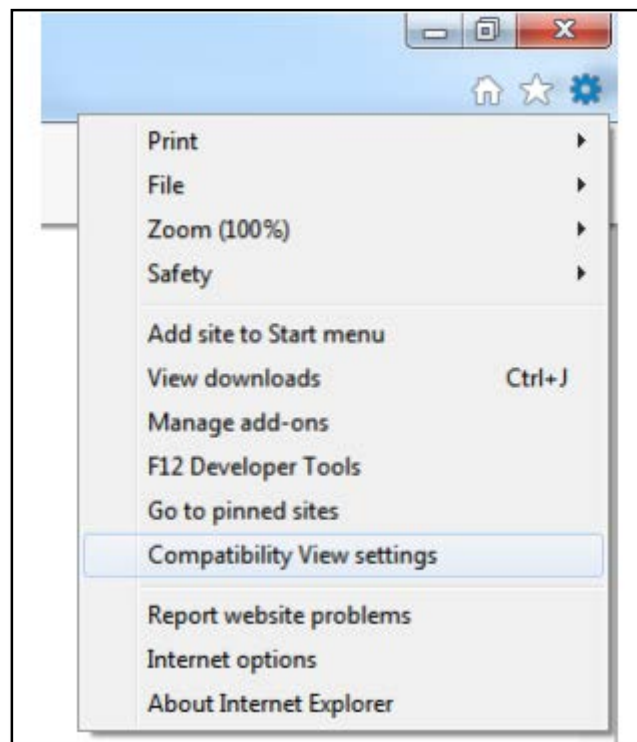
## Appendix: Online Reviewer System Troubleshooting

When using certain browsers, including versions of Internet Explorer, Chrome, Safari, or Opera, you may see text displayed in the Online Reviewer System superimposed on top of buttons or menus, making the buttons difficult or impossible to click. It may look like this:



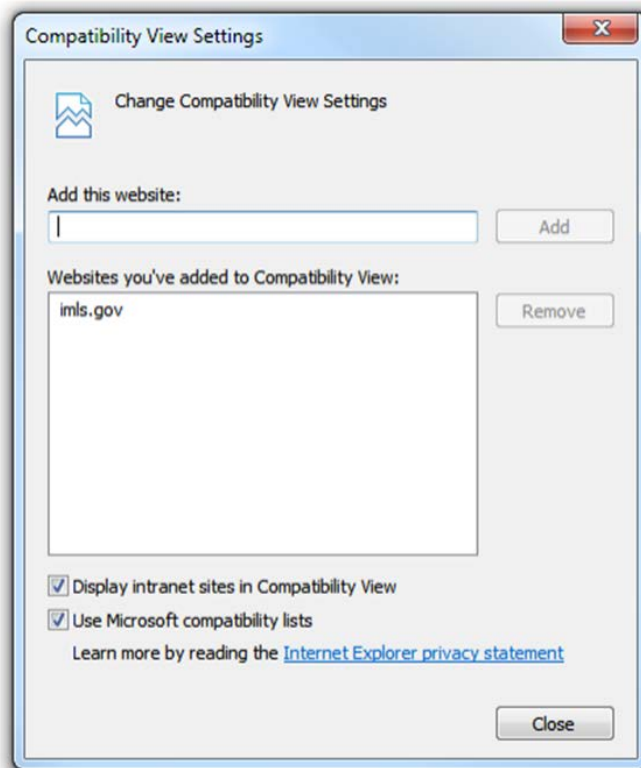
If you use **Internet Explorer (IE) with Compatibility View (or Compatibility Mode) enabled**, you may resolve this issue with the following steps:

1. Locate the Settings menu in the top right corner of the browser window and select Compatibility View settings.



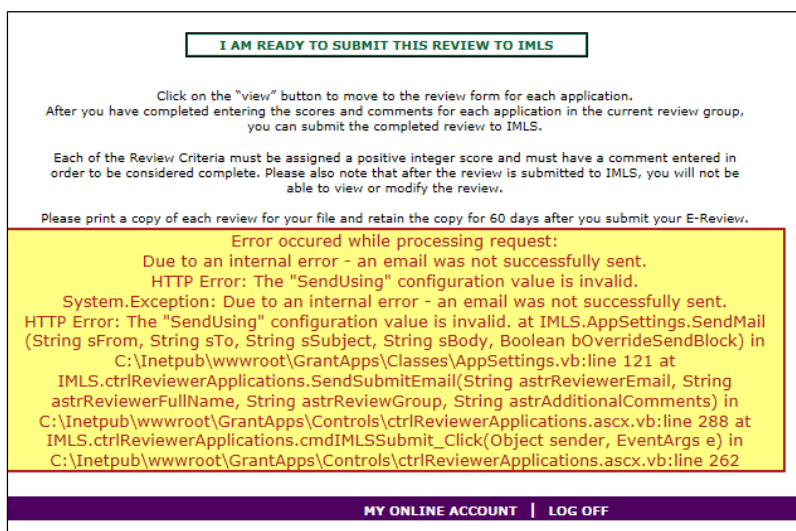


2. Type “imls.gov” in the **Add this website:** dialogue box, then click **Add**.



If you are using another version of IE, please refer to the help documentation for your version, or contact IMLS for assistance.

When you submit your comments and scores you may encounter the following error message:



**Don't worry. IMLS will have received your scores and comments if you receive this message.**