

Reviewer Instructions – Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Introduction

- You will access the applications assigned to you by clicking on a link provided to you in an email message from your IMLS primary contact.
- You will enter your scores and comments through the IMLS Online Reviewer System.
- Museum Grants for African American History and Culture (AAHC) panel review uses a single 5-point scale for each application.
- Scores must be in whole numbers only.
- You must write a constructive and substantive comment of between 30 and 2000 characters in length for each section of the application narrative.
- All sections of the narrative have equal weight and are equally important in identifying the overall strengths and weaknesses of an application.
- Address your comments to the applicant, not to IMLS or to panel reviewers.
- Your comments should reflect the numeric score you provide for the entire application.

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 applications assigned to you. Make sure you see all the applications referenced in the email, and then save each 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.

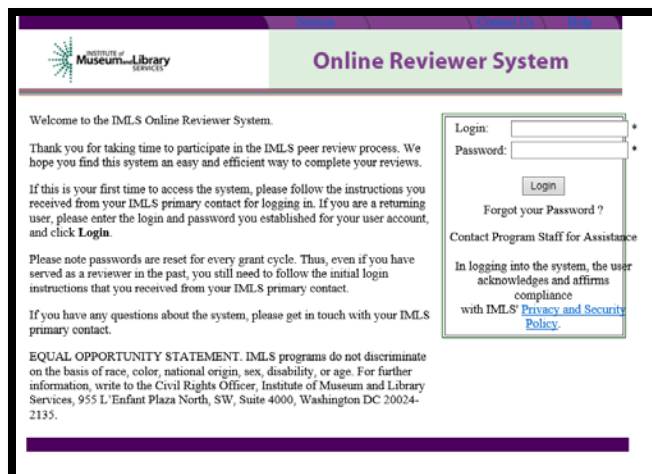
Confidentiality in IMLS Peer Review: The information contained in grant applications is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions' project activities, or any other information contained in the applications.

2. Verify Access to 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>

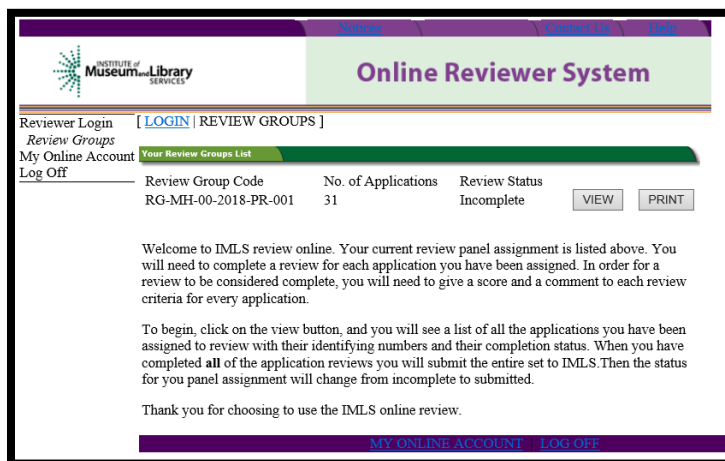
Then scroll to the bottom of the page to “Review Online,” and click on the link to access the Online Reviewer System Login.



To login, 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.

3. Assess Potential Conflicts of Interest

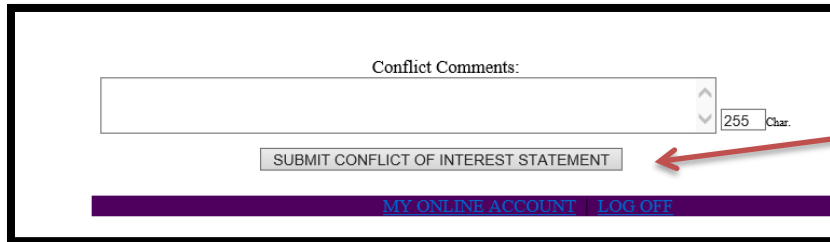
After you have created a new password, click **REVIEW GROUPS**, and your review assignment will appear. To access the list of applications assigned to you, click **VIEW**.



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.”](#)

If you think you may have a conflict of interest, **do not check any of the 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, scroll all the way down to the bottom of the webpage and click **SUBMIT CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT** using the box button shown in this screen shot.



4. Read Applications

Read the applications keeping in mind the review criteria for each section of the narrative. Use the [Panel Review Criteria](#) to guide your review. 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. You may want to revisit the AAHC guidelines at <https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/fy19-oms-aahc-nofo.pdf> to review the specific instructions provided to applicants.

5. Draft Comments

You must write a constructive and substantive comment for each section of the narrative for each application you review. All three sections of the narrative 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 wish to use the “[Peer Review Notes Template](#)” to make 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 each section of the application narrative.

Think about the review criteria for each section of the application narrative, and be sure to consider all the required components of the application as well as relevant Supporting Documents as resources for your assessment. 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.
- 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"> • are presented in a constructive manner. • are concise, specific, and easy to read and understand. • reflect the resources of the institution. • are specific to the individual application. • reflect the numeric score assigned. • highlight the application’s strengths and identify areas for improvement. • are directed to applicants—not IMLS or panel reviewers—for their use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simply summarize or paraphrase the applicant’s own words. • make derogatory remarks. • penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money. • offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information. • make vague or overly general statements. • question an applicant’s honesty or integrity.

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** reviewer comments:

Project Justification	
<p>“The applicant established an impressive rationale of the need for project. This museum is an important local resource and this project will provide excellent opportunities for current and future museum professionals. The project goals are well conceived and fall within the parameters of the AAHC grant program. The skills of current staff are being enhanced through participation in workshops, conferences and mentorship with a local historical society; a registrar will be hired; and an internship program is being developed for aspiring museum professionals. This project was based upon a recommendation from professional assessments, and it is clear that the information gained though the assessment process has greatly benefited this applicant.</p>	<p><i>Comment is substantive, addresses the review criteria, and employs a positive tone.</i></p>
<p>“The components and goals of the project are clearly identified, as are the specific collections needs and challenges this project is designed to address. The proposal also makes a compelling argument that the expansion of the Museum’s collections, the addition of a full-time Collections Assistant, and additional training and professional development will help the Museum better meet its goals. A listing of the Curator’s responsibilities and involvement with collections, for example, would have strengthened the argument for adding a Collections Assistant (as would the inclusion of a position description for this new position).</p>	<p><i>Comment correlates with mid-range score and makes implementable suggestions for improving the project.</i></p>

Project Work Plan	
<p>“The project work plan, schedule, main activities, management team, museum work experience, academic study, and summer internship are clearly described in the application narrative and the Schedule of Completion. The management team seems well qualified for their areas of responsibility. An independent evaluation firm will be retained to assess the success of the program based on four objectives related to preparing students for employment at museums or African American museums, and providing opportunities for these students to be exposed to a wide variety of museums and senior level museum professionals.”</p>	<p><i>Comment is evaluative, addresses the review criteria, and uses a positive tone.</i></p>
<p>“The design of this project is impressive and also stands to be an example of best practices for a collaborative internship program. They have clear, concise and attainable goals. The personnel for this project are very well qualified; their work will not only develop the skill set of incoming interns, but also raise the level of expertise for the existing staff. The timeline is detailed, reasonable and manageable as is the budget.</p>	<p><i>Comment provides a constructive assessment of the application and correlates with overall high score.</i></p>
Project Results	
<p>“The intended results of the project are not clearly delineated. There is an effort to connect programming with particular exhibitions, but no specificity as to how this will be accomplished. Although there is an effort at outreach with the local human rights organization, there seems to be no connection to other cultural centers and museums in the area which could provide support services and opportunities for collaboration. There is no plan set forth for sustaining these benefits after the conclusion of the grant beyond the addition of a staff member who would serve as program coordinator. The narrative should match its ambitious vision with the practical details of the project.”</p>	<p><i>Comment addresses questions from the review criteria.</i></p>
<p>“The project results stated in the proposal that relate to the collections’ conservation tasks are clearly defined; the results of the student internship program are not well defined. There is no internship coordinator defined within the proposal - either from one of the partner universities or from the museum staff - who would ensure that the students receive professional training and guidance during the development of their museum projects. To have identified such a person would definitely strengthen their internship program and the results would benefit all.”</p>	<p><i>Comment correlates with a lower overall score and makes specific implementable suggestions for improving the project.</i></p>

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

Project Justification	
<p>“The project is justified; there is a clear need to catalogue and document this material. This collection is highly valuable part of the permanent collection at the museum.”</p>	<p><i>Comment is not relevant to the program goals.</i></p>
<p>“The museum will hire a temporary curator to develop and fabricate an exhibition to coincide with their town’s bicentennial. They will exhibit materials from their archives and private collections from community stakeholders. The project will be two years in length.”</p>	<p><i>Comment paraphrases the applicant’s own words.</i></p>
Project Work Plan	
<p>“I am finding it difficult to understand the evaluation process of the project's success. Having the ability to acquire new staff is great, but the time to catalog the number of objects seems to be wishful.”</p>	<p><i>Comment does not reflect the score of 7.</i></p>
<p>“The design of the exhibition is boring and not even remotely relevant to the museum’s mission. The staff is woefully unprepared and will fail in the execution of this project. Targeting federal funds to this museum is a mistake.”</p>	<p><i>Comment is derogatory and does</i></p>

	<i>not provide useful feedback.</i>
Project Results	
"Strong results with very sustainable benefits."	<i>Comment is very brief and has little value to the applicant.</i>

6. Assign Scores

Assign an overall score to the application that reflects your comments in each of the review sections: Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results. Use a scale of 1 to 5, as described below. Use only whole numbers; do not use fractions, ranges, decimals, or zeroes.

SCORE DEFINITIONS	
5 – Excellent	The applicant’s response is outstanding and provides exceptional support for the proposed project.
4 – Very Good	The applicant’s response provides solid support for the proposed project.
3 – Good	The applicant’s response is adequate but could be strengthened in its support for the proposed project.
2 – Some Merit	The applicant’s response is flawed and does not adequately support the proposed project.
1 – Inadequate/Insufficient	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 even one missing score or 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 Scores and Comments

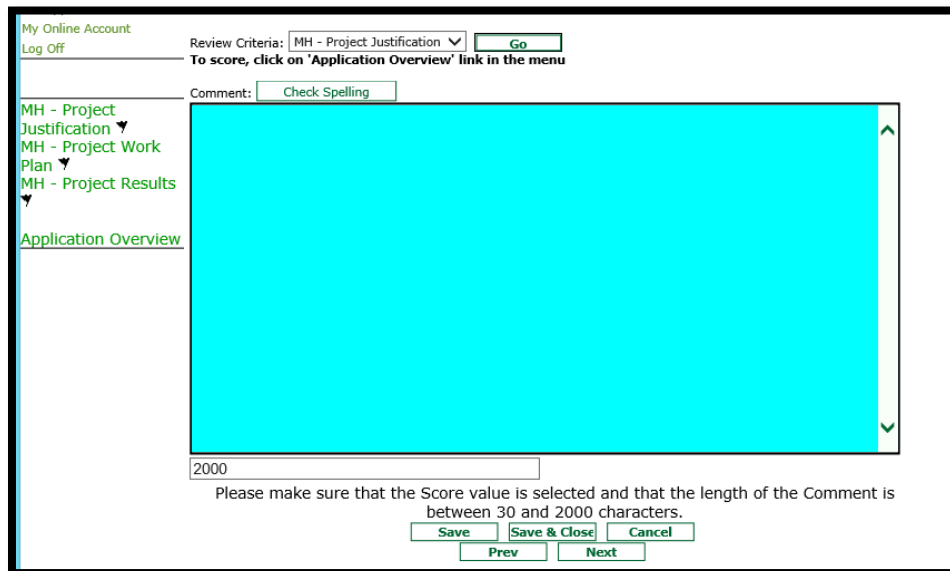
Return to the IMLS Online Reviewer System at

<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.

Login 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** to begin.

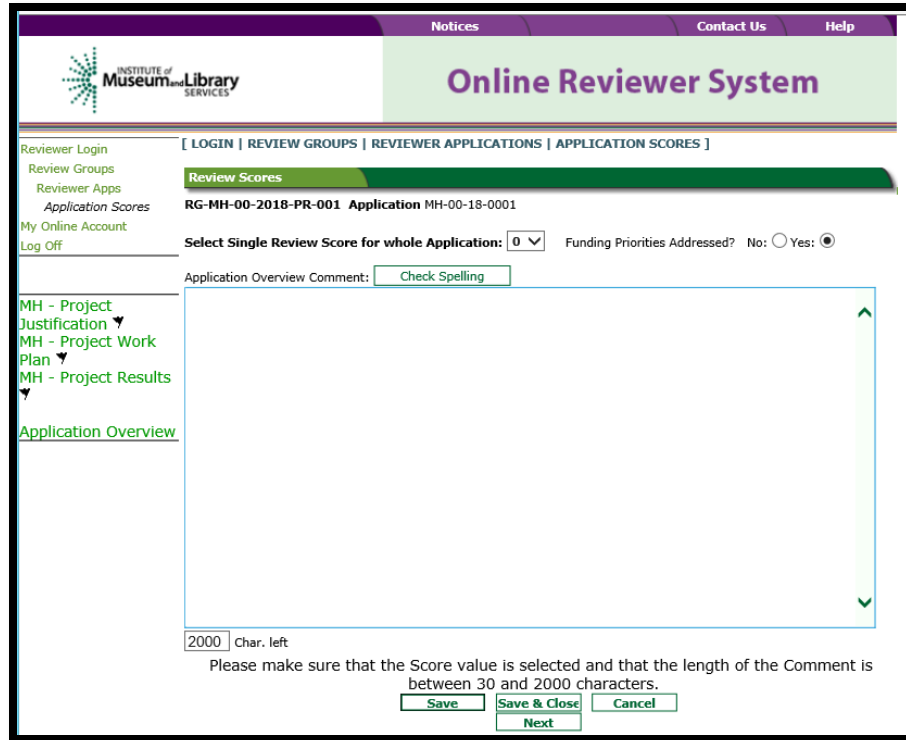
Copy and paste your comments into the appropriate blue blocks for each section of the narrative for each application.



The screenshot shows a web interface for an online reviewer system. At the top left, there is a 'My Online Account' section with a 'Log Off' link. To the right, there is a 'Review Criteria' dropdown menu set to 'MH - Project Justification' and a 'Go' button. Below this, a instruction reads: 'To score, click on 'Application Overview' link in the menu'. A 'Comment:' label is followed by a 'Check Spelling' button. The main content area is a large blue rectangular text input field. Below the text field is a character count '2000'. At the bottom, there is a message: 'Please make sure that the Score value is selected and that the length of the Comment is between 30 and 2000 characters.' Below the message are four buttons: 'Save', 'Save & Close', 'Cancel', and 'Next'. There is also a 'Prev' button.

Be sure to save each comment by clicking **SAVE** at the bottom of the page before you move on to the next one. The online reviewer system will not save your text if you have less than 30 characters or more than 2000 characters in your comment.

After entering comments in all three sections, go to the Application Overview section and choose a numeric score between 1 and 5 from the **SCORE** dropdown menu. Use the controls on the side or top of the screen to navigate between sections.



Once you have completed assigning scores and providing comments for each application assigned to you, we recommend that you print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files. Then click on **I 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. At the panel meeting, we will re-open access to the online reviewer system to give you the opportunity to make any adjustments to scores or to edit comments.

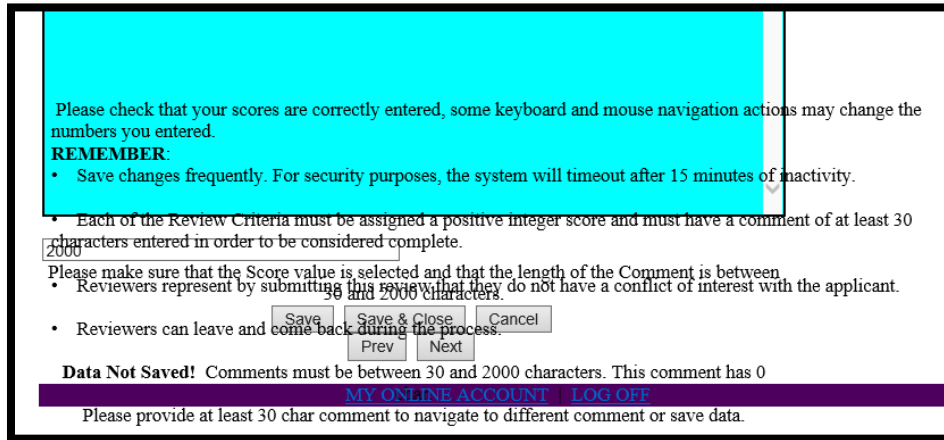
For all questions about reviewing, either technical or programmatic, please call or email your IMLS primary contact directly.

9. Manage Your Copies

Keep your applications and a copy of each review sheet until **September 30, 2019**, 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, 2019, you may destroy your copies of the applications and the review sheets.

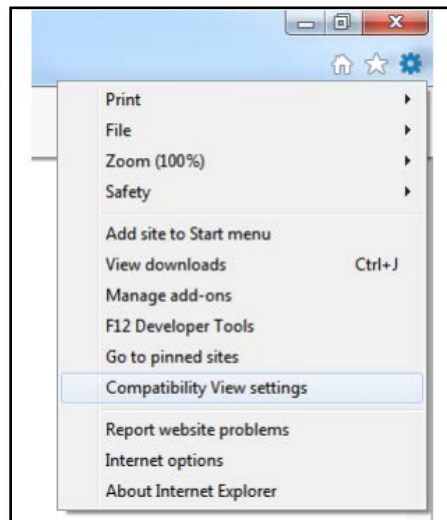
Appendix: Online Reviewer System Troubleshooting

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:

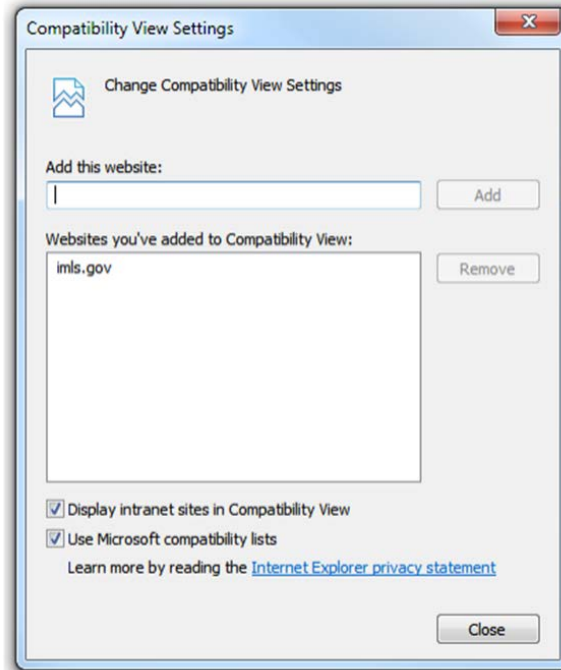


If you use **Internet Explorer (IE) with Compatibility View (or Compatibility Mode) enabled**, you may resolve this issue with the following steps:

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

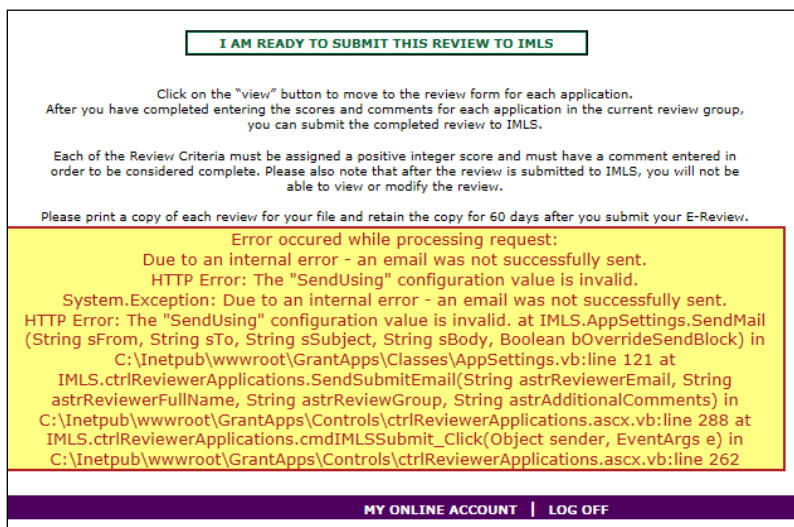


2. Type "imls.gov" in the **Add this website:** dialogue box, then click **Add**.



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