

FY 2022 Applicant Webinar: National Leadership Grants for Libraries and Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program

TRANSCRIPT

My name is Ashley Sands and I am a Senior Program Officer in the Office of Library Services at IMLS. Today I'm joined by my colleagues Maeve Coudrelle and Sarah Fuller.

Today we will briefly go over IMLS and its strategic priorities and provide an overview of the NLG and LB21 grant programs.

We will also review eligibility criteria, the project types, take you through the application process, and provide you with some tips to help make your application complete and competitive.

IMLS is an independent grantmaking agency and the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. IMLS helps ensure that all Americans have access to museum, library, and information services. You can read our mission and vision on this slide and on our website, imls.gov.

The IMLS Strategic Plan lays out several goals for the agency's work.

- In our first strategic goal, IMLS supports learning and literacy for people of all ages through museums and libraries.
- In our second strategic goal, IMLS strengthens community inclusive engagement across diverse audiences
- In our third strategic goal, IMLS makes strategic investments that support collections care and management. IMLS also seeks to promote access to museum and library collections.

You can find the Strategic Plan and more information on our website, imls.gov.

Today we will be talking about two of our grant programs – both of which have a deadline of September 24, 2021.

The first is our National Leadership Grants for Libraries program – otherwise known as NLG. This grant program supports projects that address critical needs of the library and archives fields and have the potential to advance practice in these professions to strengthen library and archival services for the American public.

Successful proposals demonstrate national impact, address a current issue facing libraries and archives, incorporate collaborations, and show relevant expertise about the topic at hand.

It is particularly important to note the importance of 'national impact' in an NLG application. Applications cannot only benefit a single individual or a single library or archives; competitive proposals show the potential for far-reaching impact across institutions. Note that we also

do not accept applications that are strictly for digitization, and we cannot accept applications for construction.

The goals for this program are to generate projects of national impact that:

- Build the workforce and institutional capacity for managing the national information infrastructure and serving the information and education needs of the public.
- Build the capacity of libraries and archives to lead and contribute to efforts that improve community well-being and strengthen civic engagement.
- Improve the ability of libraries and archives to provide broad access to and use of information and collections with emphasis on collaboration to avoid duplication and maximize reach.
- Strengthen the ability of libraries to provide services to affected communities in the event of an emergency or disaster.
- Strengthen the ability of libraries, archives, and museums to work collaboratively for the benefit of the communities they serve.

Each applicant should align their proposed project with one of these five program goals and one or more of the associated objectives. Goal and objective choices should be identified clearly in the Narrative.

The other program we will be discussing today is the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program, or LB21 for short. This program is designed to support the development of a diverse workforce of librarians and archivists in order to meet the information needs of their communities.

Like NLG, successful proposals will include broad impact, address a current issue facing libraries and archives, include collaborative elements, show relevant expertise about the topic at hand, and will broaden participation in the library and archives profession through the recruitment, education, and retention of a diverse workforce.

Again, similar to NLG, it is important to note the 'broad impact' in an LB21 application. Generally speaking, applications cannot only benefit a single individual or a single library or archives; competitive proposals show the potential for far-reaching impact across institutions.

For both NLG and LB21, please keep in mind that September 24th will be the only deadline for submitting preliminary proposals in fiscal year 2022.

The goals for this program are to generate projects of broad impact that:

- Recruit, train, develop, and retain a diverse workforce of library and archives professionals.
- Develop faculty, library, and archives leaders by increasing the institutional capacity of libraries, archives, and of graduate programs related to library and information science.

- Enhance the training and professional development of the library and archival workforce to meet the needs of their communities.

Each applicant should align their proposed project with one of these three program goals and one or more of the associated objectives. Goal and objective choices should be identified clearly in the Narrative.

On the IMLS website we have landing pages for each of the two programs. If you're on this webinar it's likely you've already visited one or both. These pages provide an overview of the programs, links to the full notices of funding opportunity, or NOFOs, and also relevant webinar recordings – so if you want to refer to this applicant webinar later that's where you will find it.

In addition, on each page you can find a list of the relevant program staff you should contact with questions about the grant programs and the application process. If you are unsure who to contact, please just reach out to one of us and we will make sure you get connected to the program officer whose expertise best aligns with your project idea.

Your organization is eligible to apply if it is: 1) a unit of state or local government or a 501c3 nonprofit organization, 2) located in one of the 50 states or territories, and 3) one of six types of organizations, which we'll list on the next slide.

Please also note that the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant program has additional eligibility restrictions for Early Career Research Development proposals, so you should pay attention to that in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

In addition to the criteria on the previous slide, your organization is eligible to apply if you are one of these six types of organizations, including a library or parent organization, an academic or administrative unit, a digital library, or a library agency, consortium, association, or organization.

If you have any questions about your eligibility, please reach out to someone on our program staff.

You are not eligible to apply to these programs if you are a federally-operated institution, a for-profit institution, an individual, or a foreign country or organization.

A federally-operated institution does not mean an institution that receives other federal grants. It means that if you are a federal agency, for example, the Library of Congress or Smithsonian, we cannot fund you.

If you are an ineligible institution, we encourage you to partner with an eligible institution. While you cannot be the lead applicant, you can apply through a partnership with an eligible institution and may be able to receive funding in that manner.

More information about this is provided in the guidelines on our website, but the point here is that it is important to figure out early if you are eligible to apply for the program that is of interest to you.

Here we have provided some guidance for those of you who are unsure whether your project idea fits into NLG or LB21.

If your project is primarily about education and training for information professionals – either formal or informal education – you should probably apply to LB21.

If you are a non-tenured, tenure-track faculty member interested in research funding, you will want to look at the Early Career Research Development category in LB21.

Otherwise, any other work of national significance to libraries, archives, and information science will likely fall under the NLG program.

Please make sure to read through the Notice of Funding Opportunity carefully to ensure your project is aligned with the correct grant program and that you meet eligibility criteria. If you are unsure, feel free to contact one of our program staff for guidance.

All applicants will also have to select a project category. These project categories each have different limits regarding the period of performance of the grant, which you can see in this table.

- **Planning** grants are for preliminary project activities – many people think about this as planning for a larger grant, but that’s not a requirement. Planning activities may include conducting preliminary research, conducting an environmental scan, rapidly prototyping a new program or service, or working on creating partnerships to support larger future activities.
- **Forum** Grants are for convening experts and stakeholders around an issue of national significance. This could be to support one large meeting or several meetings focused on a particular area to establish a shared agenda or understanding. Planning and Forum grants must be for one to two years.
- **Implementation** grants and **Applied Research** grants support project implementation or development activities, as well as investigating key research questions in library and archival practice. These are limited to 1-3 years.
- The LB21 program also offers the **Early Career Research Development** category, which supports the research of an untenured, tenure-track library and information science faculty member.

To give you a better sense of the scale, here are the maximum dollar amounts you may request, which are based on the funding category you select. In these two programs, the minimum dollar request is \$50,000.

There is flexibility within the funding levels, but you should keep in mind that we have limited funding and both programs are highly competitive. We fund very few million-dollar projects. There is a value proposition that comes into play – the higher the amount you are asking for,

the more compelling your case must be for how your work will impact the entire field and represent a significant return on investment.

The Notices of Funding Opportunity also spell out these funding caps along with the corresponding cost-share requirements.

Cost sharing is not considered in the review of applications but is an eligibility criterion. Again, this is spelled out in the notices of funding opportunity.

Generally, a one-to-one cost share is required for both programs, with a few exceptions. Applicants in the Applied Research funding category and those requesting less than \$249,999 are exempt from this requirement. Additionally, LB21 applicants are not required to cost share the funds budgeted for student support.

Please remember that if a cost is unallowable for IMLS funds, it is also unallowable for cost share.

I will now pass along to my colleague Sarah Fuller to continue the presentation, beginning by highlighting what's new or different in the funding opportunities this year.

If you are familiar with our programs from recent years, you will notice that the Goals and Objectives are new for this year. Additionally, we no longer require you to select a project category – you may remember them as lifelong learning, community catalysts, and national digital infrastructures and initiatives. Instead, all applicants should choose the goal and objective that best describe your project focus. This change was made to simplify the application process and does not represent a change in agency direction. The previous project categories are reflected within the new goals and objectives.

Applicants will still be required to choose a Project Type, but you may notice the language for these has changed.

The “project” category has been replaced with “Implementation”. The change reduces confusion and subtly reflects an emphasis on projects that have the potential to be easily adoptable, sustainable, and widely implementable across the field.

The “Research in Service to Practice” category has been replaced with “Applied Research.” “Applied Research” is more commonly used in grant-making and in libraries and archives. We continue to seek proposals that investigate topics or questions relevant to library and information science practice that will have findings and implications for library and archival practice shared throughout the award period.

Finally, we have simplified National Forum to Forum – but please note this shortened phrase is not intended to lessen the importance of national or broad impact, which are still required for NLG and LB21 proposals.

Also new this year is that both the NLG and LB21 Programs use four performance measures as a basis for understanding (1) how well the grant program is meeting its goals and (2) how

individual projects are being managed. While it is not necessary to reference it in the preliminary proposal phase, applicants preparing an Invited Full Proposal will be asked to describe how they will monitor and assess their performance in carrying out their project, using these four measures.

Each application must include three forms that are generated within grants.gov and a two-page preliminary proposal narrative. No other documents will be accepted. Applications must be submitted through grants.gov before midnight Eastern time on September 24, 2021.

Please note that Grants.gov has adopted a “workspace” feature, which you may be required to use to submit your proposal. We recommend you give yourself ample time to familiarize yourself with the system.

IMLS’ internal system for receiving applications from grants.gov will only accept documents in pdf form. Any applications that include a non-pdf document will be bounced back by our system and will not be considered submitted. We recommend ensuring all documents are in pdf format prior to submittal and SUBMIT EARLY. Do not wait until 11pm on the night of the deadline to submit.

After proposals are submitted through Grants.gov, IMLS staff screens them for completeness and eligibility. After that, proposals undergo peer review. After peer review, all applicants will receive reviewer comments and feedback. The most competitive applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal for further consideration.

Applicants who are invited to submit full proposals will need to submit those by March 25, 2022.

The required components for full proposals are much more extensive and are also listed in the Notices of Funding Opportunity. These applications are also submitted through grants.gov and will similarly undergo a peer review process. Full proposal applicants will be provided reviewer comments and feedback regardless of whether the project is selected for funding or not. The IMLS director makes final funding decisions, which will be announced in July 2022, pending availability of funds and at the discretion of the Director.

These are important dates you need to be aware of during this application cycle.

Please read through the notices of funding opportunity carefully to ensure you are meeting eligibility criteria and have fulfilled all of the application requirements.

There are three places where you must register your organization in order to be able to submit a proposal—DUNS, SAM, and Grants.gov. We strongly recommend immediately checking that all of these registrations are active, as it can take some time to update or renew them.

First, your organization will need a DUNS number. The URL for acquiring a DUNS number is on the slide. Please note The Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) will be replacing the D-U-N-S®

Number in April 2022 and will be requested in, and assigned by, the System for Award Management, or SAM. For your application, you will still need a DUNS number.

Next, your institution must be registered with SAM. It's important to keep in mind that your SAM registration is good for one year and must be renewed. That's something you don't want to be doing right before the deadline, so we recommend checking your status early on. If it's not your job to track your SAM registration, we recommend you contact the person at your organization whose job it is, so you can make sure this is in place.

Finally, you'll need an account at Grants.gov, which is the portal through which you will submit your application. Allow at least two weeks for the registration process here, and even if you know you're registered, make sure you know who is authorized for your institution and make sure they know their login information. In fact, if you don't absolutely know for sure that this is all in place now, I'd recommend checking on it as soon as we get done today. Again, it's not something you want to be trying to accomplish anywhere close to the deadline.

For the final part of this webinar, we'll go over some tips for preparing a competitive application.

You should think about the preliminary proposal narrative as a movie trailer, providing the highlights of what a full proposal would include. We recognize that it is quite a challenge fitting all of the information about your project into two pages so you will want to be as succinct and specific as possible. The preliminary proposal should follow the general sections of a full proposal narrative and address the Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results. For LB21, it must also include a Diversity Plan.

Some elements you will want to address in your preliminary proposal include clearly identifying the project director and any project partners – this can easily and quickly be done in the first sentence: Institution X and Institution Y will partner together to make A or accomplish B. They request \$Z from IMLS. We recommend foregoing lengthy introductions and getting directly into the meat of what your project is all about in the first sentence or two.

In your project justification, you will want to ground your project in current and relevant research and practice.

You will want to give an outline of your proposed work plan – what will it look like and how will it be accomplished.

If it's a research proposal, you must articulate specific research questions and describe your data collection and analysis methods.

You should make clear the relevance of your project to the program goal and also demonstrate the potential national impact and projected outcomes of your work.

Please note a budget summary is required and must include the total anticipated costs of the project, including cost share (if required), and a breakdown of how funds would be allocated into different cost categories. Proposals that do not include this information will be rejected without review.

The Search Awarded Grants section of the IMLS website has the full and preliminary proposals associated with the LB21 and NLG projects that have been funded over the past few years, which can be helpful to review as you start to work on your proposal.

IMLS will instruct reviewers to consider the following review criteria when evaluating Preliminary Proposals. Applicants will want to keep these in mind when writing the two-page proposal.

- How well does the proposal address the goals and objectives of the grant program ?
- What elements are in place and what elements are missing for successful execution of the proposed project? What recommendations do you have for improving the proposal?
- Considering the topic, project type selection, amount of funds requested, and scope of potential impact, should the applicant be invited to submit a full proposal at this time? Why or why not?

The Notices of Funding Opportunity have specific guidance for applications in the Applied Research category. This slide lists some of the questions we ask you to consider, including thinking about the research questions, theoretical framing, research methods, and other aspects of your proposed project. Please note that Applied Research and Early Career Development preliminary proposals MUST include research questions.

IMLS Program Officers are available to discuss your project ideas with you and to look over a draft of your preliminary proposal. If you'd like a Program Officer to take a look at a draft, please email it to one of us by **September 1, 2021**. Sending it even earlier is preferred, but **September 1st** will be the last day we are able to accept drafts. One of us will take a look at it and then we can schedule a phone call with you to discuss your draft and to answer any questions you might have. Please refer to the list at the end of this presentation to identify the Program Officer whose expertise best aligns with the subject matter in your proposal. While we can continue to answer questions you may have about the process, we can read and provide feedback on only one draft submission for each proposal.

Finally, here are some things that you can do to ensure you are submitting your most competitive proposal. The first you've already accomplished by attending this webinar. Next, you want to choose the grant program and goal that best goes with your proposal idea.

Some other tips – read through the preliminary proposals from last year to get some ideas of what was successful; articulate your project goals as quickly as possible in the preliminary proposal; include a budget paragraph; and be sure you are submitting all of the completed and required documents in pdf format.

I highly recommend having a colleague unfamiliar with your project read through your proposal prior to submission – we all get too close to our work, and this will ensure that the proposal you are submitting clearly communicates your project idea.

As we mentioned already, program staff are available to assist with any questions you have about the proposal process. Here are some of the topical areas reflected in each program officer's expertise and funding portfolio. This table is not intended to be comprehensive, but more so is intended to give you a sense of the best person to reach out to. That being said, we are a close group, so if we believe one of our colleagues has better expertise to discuss your project, we will ensure the person with the closest expertise gets back to you.

And don't forget – program staff are available to discuss your project ideas with you and to look over a draft of your preliminary proposal. To take advantage of this opportunity, you must email a draft of your proposal no later than end of day on Wednesday, September 1st. One draft submission is the limit for each proposal. You are more than welcome and even encouraged to email or contact us well in advance of that deadline.

Thank you for joining us for this presentation and we look forward to hearing from you soon.