



Dear Colleague -

The Office of Library Services (OLS) is pleased that you are considering seeking support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services for the important work that you do for your communities as our whole nation celebrates the 250th anniversary of American independence.

Now more than ever, we are thrilled to support America's libraries, which can and should serve as civic centers of learning and culture for a nation of citizens. Benjamin Franklin once hoped that America's libraries would make America's "common tradesmen and farmers as intelligent as most gentlemen from other countries." We hope that by playing a leading role in our national celebration of 250 years of independence, libraries across America fulfill Franklin's vision as bastions of education and culture in every community. We are excited not only to support general improvements across the library field, but also to promote libraries as they teach Americans about their heritage and history, especially one of the greatest chapters in the human story-- America's founding.

We encourage you to carefully read the Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) for the library grant programs and shape your proposal in a way that responds to the Goals and Objectives of the program you choose.

In addition to the requirements set out in the NOFOs, OLS encourages you to consider how your work might build upon, or relate to, OLS' field-wide programs and initiatives. OLS particularly welcomes projects that:

- Meaningfully engage and educate communities about our nation's great history and the incredible story of America's founding, in fitting commemoration of the 250th anniversary of American Independence.
- Leverage libraries' roles in their communities to connect workers with employers, apprenticeship programs, skills training and the public workforce system. Applicants are encouraged to read and consider [Executive Order \(EO\) 14278](#), "Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future."
- Expand on the important roles libraries play in connecting their communities with health services, promoting overall physical excellence and mental wellness.
- Build bridges and further meaningful partnerships with other civic institutions in their communities, including but not limited to local governments and philanthropic organizations.
- Facilitate regular and family-friendly programming that is of social and educational benefit to children and parents alike.

- Creatively and effectively use new technologies, including artificial intelligence, to improve both academic practices and visitor experiences at our nation's libraries. Applicants are encouraged to read and consider [EO 14277](#), "Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth," as they work on related projects.
- In his inaugural address, President Trump said "We will stand bravely, we will live proudly, we will dream boldly, and nothing will stand in our way because we are Americans." We welcome projects that refocus cultural institutions on what unites us by fostering respectful civil dialogue. In doing so, we acknowledge our core Constitutional Rights, including Free Exercise of Religion. Applicants may find it helpful to review and consider [EO 14188](#), "Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism," and [EO 14202](#), "Eradicating Anti-Christian Bias," as they work on projects to strengthen American civil society.

Upon reviewing the NOFOs, you will see that there are several programs within OLS. Should you choose to apply within the grant program below, we provide additional information about topics and priorities that we aim to emphasize in this funding cycle:

- Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program: IMLS has particular interest in exploring alternative pathways into the library services field. We are particularly excited about projects that explore innovative alternatives to traditional credentialing and librarian education. We are also interested in projects which explore cutting edge tools and fresh topics in the content and provision of continuing education.

To fulfill the President's promise that "the forgotten man and woman will be forgotten no longer," we enthusiastically welcome institutions which serve rural and remote communities to apply, as well as those which haven't traditionally been recipients of federal funding. We also encourage institutions that promote a positive and uplifting vision of American history and our shared national achievements to consider applying to IMLS.

Thank you for your interest in working with IMLS as we celebrate America's 250th birthday and further its spirit for years to come. We look forward to partnering with your institution to share our nation's tremendous heritage with all our fellow citizens!

Sincerely,



Keith E. Sonderling



Lisa Solomon
Senior Official Performing the Duties of IMLS Director



Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program

Funding Opportunity Number: LB21-FY26

Assistance Listing Number: 45.313

OMB Control No.: 3137-0091

Expiration date: 7/31/2027

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Before You Begin

If you believe you're a good candidate for this funding opportunity, review the application deadlines, and leave plenty of time to prepare.

Set up your SAM.gov (including Unique Entity Identifier) and Grants.gov registrations now. If you're already registered, check to be sure your registrations are active, and all information is up to date.

Register in SAM.gov (registration can take several weeks):

Your organization must have an active [SAM.gov](#) account and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) before you apply. See [Registration Requirements](#) and [Guidance for Required Registrations](#).

Register in Grants.gov (registration can take several days):

You must have an active [Grants.gov registration](#). You'll need an active SAM.gov account and a Login.gov account to register and access Grants.gov. See [Registration Requirements](#) and [Guidance for Required Registrations](#).

Apply by:

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on March 13, 2026.

Bookmark these resources for important information:

- [eCFR: 2 CFR Part 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#)
- [General Terms and Conditions for IMLS Discretionary Awards](#)
- [Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program page \(IMLS.gov\)](#)



This NOFO has internal links to help you quickly find what you need. In Adobe Reader, you can go back to where you were by pressing Alt + Left Arrow (Windows) or Command + Left Arrow (Mac) on your keyboard.



Review the Opportunity

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1. Basic Information

Opportunity Overview

Federal Awarding Agency	Institute of Museum and Library Services
Funding Opportunity Title	Laura Bush 21 st Century Librarian Program
Announcement Type	Modification of FY2025 Notice of Funding Opportunity
Funding Opportunity Number	LB21-FY26
Assistance Listing Number	45.313
Type of Assistance Instrument	Grant
Application Deadline	Submit through Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on March 13, 2026.

Award Overview

Key Dates

Anticipated date of notification of award decisions	August 2026 (subject to the availability of funds and IMLS discretion)
Anticipated start dates for new awards	Projects must begin on September 1, 2026.
Anticipated period of performance	September 1, 2026 – August 31, 2029. Project activities may be carried out for one to three years, based on the selected project type. See Project Types .

Funding Details

Total amount of funding IMLS expects to award through this announcement	\$8,500,000	
Expected performance indicators, targets, baseline data, and data collection	See Performance Measures .	
Anticipated number of awards	35	
Award amount range	Planning	\$75,000 - \$200,000
	Forum	\$75,000 - \$200,000
	Community-Centered Implementation	\$25,000 - \$100,000
	National Implementation	\$75,000 - \$1,000,000
	Early Career Research	\$75,000 - \$750,000
	Applied Research	\$75,000 - \$750,000
Average amount of funding per award experienced in previous years	\$266,507	

The funding in the above Award Overview is subject to the availability of funds and IMLS discretion. We are not bound by any estimates in this announcement.

Contingent upon the availability of funds, the quality of applications, and IMLS discretion, we may make additional awards from the pool of unfunded applications from this competition.

Executive Summary

Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian (LB21) projects build a library and archival workforce that can meet the information needs of communities and increase the institutional capacity of libraries, archives, and library and information science graduate programs across the country.

The program supports projects that:

- provide training and professional development to library and archives professionals;
- develop faculty and information leaders; and
- recruit, educate, and retain the next generation of library and archives professionals.

Projects can support the recruitment, education, training, and retention of pre-professionals, students, faculty, and the current library and archives workforce.

Eligibility is restricted to organizations that are:

- Located in the United States or any U.S. Territories or freely associated States; AND
- A unit of state, local or Tribal government or a private, nonprofit organization; AND
- One of seven types of qualifying organizations:
 1. A library or a parent organization, such as a school district, a municipality, a State agency, or an academic institution, that is responsible for the administration of a library.
 2. An academic or administrative unit, such as a graduate school of library and information science that is part of an institution of higher education through which it would apply;
 3. A digital library or archives, if it makes materials publicly available and provides library or archival services, including selection, organization, description, reference, and preservation, under the supervision of at least one permanent professional staff librarian/archivist;
 4. A library or archival agency that is an official agency of a State, Tribal, or other unit of government and is charged by the law governing it with the extension and development of public library and archives services within its jurisdiction;
 5. A library or archives consortium that is a local, statewide, regional, interstate, or international cooperative association of library or archives entities that provides for the systematic and effective coordination of the resources of eligible libraries or archives, as defined above, and information centers that work to improve the services delivered to the clientele of these libraries or archives; or

6. A library or archives association that exists on a permanent basis; primarily serves libraries, archives, or library or archival professionals on a national, regional, state, or local level; and engages in activities designed to advance the well-being of libraries, archives, and the library, and archives professions.
7. A nonprofit organization affiliated with a library or archives whose sole mission includes supporting the specified library or archives, has the ability to administer the project, and can ensure compliance with the terms of this NOFO and the applicable law, including the IMLS Assurances and Certifications. We require that you provide an agreement from the library or archives that details the activities the applicant and library will perform and binds the library to the statements and assurances in the application.

Agency Contact Information

IMLS staff are available by phone and email to answer programmatic and administrative questions relating to this grant program. We also host webinars to introduce potential applicants to funding opportunities. For more information, [see our list of webinars and instructions for accessing them](#).

2. Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for an award under the LB21 Program, your organization must meet **all three** of the following eligibility criteria.



Your organization must be:

- ✓ a unit of State, local, or Tribal government; or
- a private, nonprofit organization that has nonprofit status under the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended. [See Conditionally Required Documents](#) for more information);

and:



Your organization 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,
- ✓ the Republic of the Marshall Islands,
- ✓ the Federated States of Micronesia; or
- ✓ the Republic of Palau.

and:



Your organization must qualify as one of the following seven types of organizations:

- (1) A library or a parent organization, such as a school district, a municipality, a State agency, or an academic institution, that is

responsible for the administration of a library.

Eligible libraries include:

- ✓ Public libraries.
- ✓ Public elementary and secondary school libraries.
- ✓ Tribal libraries.
- ✓ College (including community college) and university libraries and archives.
- ✓ Research libraries and archives that are not an integral part of an institution of higher education and that make publicly available library or archival services and materials that are suitable for scholarly research and are not otherwise available.
- ✓ Private or other special library, but only if the State in which such private or special library is located determines that the library should be considered a library for purposes of Library Services and Technology (see 20 U.S.C. § 9121-9165).
- ✓ Archives, including institutional, community-based, and special collections, that are under the supervision of at least one permanent professional staff member and are available to the public.

(2) An academic or administrative unit, such as a graduate school of library and information science that is part of an institution of higher education through which it would apply;

(3) A digital library or archives, if it makes materials publicly available and provides library or archival services, including selection, organization, description, reference, and preservation, under the supervision of at least one permanent professional staff librarian/archivist;

(4) A library or archival agency that is an official agency of a State, Tribal, or other unit of government and is charged by the law governing it with the extension and development of public library and archives services within its jurisdiction;

(5) A library or archives consortium that is a local, statewide, regional, interstate, or international cooperative association of library or archives entities that provides for the systematic and effective coordination of the resources of eligible libraries or archives, as defined above, and information centers that work to improve the services delivered to the clientele of these libraries or archives; or

(6) A library or archives association that exists on a permanent basis; primarily serves libraries, archives, or library or archival professionals on a national, regional, state, or local level; and engages in activities designed to advance the well-being of libraries, archives, and the library, and archives professions.

(7) A nonprofit organization affiliated with a library or archives whose sole mission includes supporting the specified library or archives, has the ability to administer the project, and can ensure compliance with the terms of this NOFO and the applicable law, including the IMLS Assurances and Certifications. We require that you provide an agreement from the library or archives that details the activities the applicant and library will perform and binds the library to the statements and assurances in the application.

Native American Tribal organizations are encouraged to apply if they otherwise meet the above eligibility requirements.



[Find IMLS contact information for the LB21 program.](#)

We recognize the potential for valuable contributions to the overall goals of the LB21 Program by entities that do not meet the eligibility requirements above. Although such entities may not serve as legal applicants, they are encouraged to participate in projects. Consult with an IMLS Program Contact about any eligibility questions before applying.

Other Eligibility Information

Application Limits



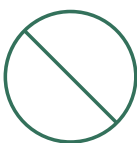
- Applications for renewal or supplementation of your currently active IMLS awards are not eligible to compete with applications for new awards.
- There is no limit to the number of applications you may submit under the **Planning, Forum, National Implementation, Applied Research, or Early Career Research** project types.
- You may only submit one application under the **Community-Centered Implementation** project type.
- You may not submit the same proposal under more than one project type.
- Individual Project Directors may be named on multiple applications.

Partnerships and Collaborations



- Applications involving partnerships or collaborations are welcome.
- When two or more institutions or organizations work together on a project, one of them must meet all eligibility requirements, serve as the lead applicant, and administer the award on behalf of the other(s).
- If we fund the project, the lead applicant will be programmatically, fiscally, and legally responsible for the award.

Ineligible Applicants



- We will not review applications from ineligible applicants. We will notify you if your application will not be reviewed because your organization is determined to be ineligible.
- We will not make awards to ineligible applicants. To receive an IMLS award, your organization must be eligible and in compliance with [applicable IMLS, administrative and national policy requirements](#).

Application Completeness and Deadlines



- Applicants must submit their materials by the deadlines indicated in the [Opportunity Overview](#). We won't consider late applications for funding under this notice.
- If your request for federal funding as shown on the IMLS Budget Form, including all direct and indirect costs, is outside the applicable funding level range for your selected project type, we may reject your application from consideration for funding in this program.
- Your application must be complete, and your project and budget must adhere to the program's [guidelines](#) and [funding restrictions](#).

Cost Share Requirements

The requirements to provide cost share from non-federal sources differ by project type. Cost sharing is an eligibility criterion and is not considered in the peer review of applications.

Cost share is the portion of the project costs that is not paid by IMLS funds. Common examples of cost share include cash outlays; contribution of property and services; and in-kind



[Learn more about Cost Sharing in the Budget](#)

contributions, such as staff or volunteer time that support project activities.

Cost share is an eligibility criterion and is not considered in the review of applications.

Calculate cost share you include in your project budget carefully. If you receive an award, you will be required to meet your cost share commitments.

Project Type	IMLS Award Amount	Cost Share Requirement
Planning	\$75,000 - \$200,000	No cost share required.
Forum	\$75,000 - \$200,000	No cost share required.
Community-Centered Implementation	\$25,000 - \$100,000	No cost share required.
National Implementation	\$75,000 - \$1,000,000	Requests of more than \$299,999 in IMLS funds require at least 1:1 cost share from non-federal sources. To calculate the minimum required cost share, subtract Student Support costs (direct costs only) from the total requested IMLS funds (direct and indirect costs).
Early Career Research	\$75,000 - \$750,000	No cost share required.
Applied Research	\$75,000 - \$750,000	No cost share required.

3. Program Description

Agency Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The mission of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is to advance, support, and empower America’s museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. Three agency-level goals, with two objectives each, guide our grantmaking.

<div>Agency-Level Goal 1</div> <div>Champion Lifelong Learning</div>	<div>Objective 1.1</div> <div>Advance shared knowledge and learning opportunities for all.</div> <div>Objective 1.2</div> <div>Support the training and professional development of the museum and library workforce.</div>
<div>Agency-Level Goal 2</div> <div>Strengthen Community Engagement</div>	<div>Objective 2.1</div> <div>Promote broad public engagement.</div> <div>Objective 2.2</div> <div>Support community collaboration and foster civic discourse.</div>
<div>Agency-Level Goal 3</div> <div>Advance Collections Stewardship and Access</div>	<div>Objective 3.1</div> <div>Support collections care and management.</div> <div>Objective 3.2</div> <div>Promote access to museum and library collections.</div>

The LB21 Program supports the achievement of **agency-level Goal 1, Champion Lifelong Learning, and Objective 1.2, Support the training and professional development of the museum and library workforce.** Like all IMLS grant programs, it is designed to facilitate delivery of significant results consistent with the IMLS federal authorizing legislation ([20 U.S.C. §9101](#) et seq.; in particular, [§ 9165 \(Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program\)](#)).

Each award that we make through the LB21 Program will contribute meaningfully to the achievement of both program and agency-level goals.

LB21 Program Goals and Objectives

The LB21 program supports the recruitment, development, and retention of library and archives professionals to meet the information needs of their communities.

We encourage applicants to work collaboratively with partners such as archives, libraries, museums, school systems, universities, extension programs, youth-serving organizations, and workforce/economic development organizations, where applicable.



We expect LB21 projects to:

- influence practice across one or more disciplines within the library and archives fields;
- reflect a thorough understanding of current practice, knowledge about the subject matter, and an awareness of and support for current priorities in the field;
- use collaboration, as needed, to demonstrate buy-in, input, and access to appropriate expertise;
- employ outreach strategies to disseminate activities, results, and findings; and
- generate measurable results.

The LB21 Program has two program goals and two objectives associated with each goal. You should align your proposed project with one of these program goals and one of the associated objectives. Clearly identify your goal and objective choice your project narrative.

LB21 Program Goal 1

Recruit and educate future library and archives professionals, faculty, and staff

Objective 1.1

Develop or enhance practices, programs, or initiatives encouraging students to pursue careers in library and information science.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- needs assessments;
- pre-professional recruitment;
- middle school, high school, and undergraduate exposure programs;
- summer institutes;
- workshops;
- certificate programs;
- paid internships;
- mentoring;
- fellowships; and
- cohort activities.

Objective 1.2

Develop or enhance initiatives, programs, or curricula to increase the capacity of institutions to educate or retain library and information science students.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- needs assessments;
- summer institutes;
- workshops;
- certificate programs;
- paid internships;
- mentoring;
- fellowships;
- cohort activities;
- organizational dynamics; and
- curricula development.

LB21 Program Goal 2

Train and retain current library and archives professionals, faculty, and staff

Objective 2.1

Develop or enhance professional development and training programs to enable the library and archival workforce to meet the needs of their communities.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- institutes;
- trainings;
- summer programs;
- workshops;
- certificate programs;
- fellowships;
- mentoring;
- communities of practice; and
- working groups.

Objective 2.2

Support the research of untenured, tenure-track library and information science faculty, furthering the faculty member’s long-term research agenda, career trajectory, and professional development.

Choose Objective 2.2 if you are applying for an Early Career Research project.

Project Types

The LB21 Program has six project types. You must designate one for each application you submit.

You may submit more than one application to the LB21 Program; however, you may not submit the same proposal under more than one project type. **You may only submit one proposal to the Community-Centered Implementation project type.**

Planning, Forum, National Implementation, Applied Research, and Early Career Research proposals must demonstrate how you will achieve and measure far-reaching impact.

See below for the full list of LB21 project types, the characteristics of each, and corresponding periods of performance.

Project Type	Project Characteristics
<div>Planning</div> <div>1-2 years</div>	<div>Planning projects support exploratory activities, such as:</div> <div><div>✓ analyzing needs and feasibility;</div><div>✓ solidifying partnerships; or</div><div>✓ developing project work plans, prototypes, proofs of concept, curricula, and pilot studies.</div></div> <div>You should identify planning activities that have the potential to lead to future implementation or research efforts.</div> <div>You should demonstrate how you will achieve and measure far-reaching impact.</div>

Project Type	Project Characteristics
<div>Forum</div> <div>1-2 years</div>	<p>Forum projects support convening qualified experts and key stakeholders, including those from adjacent fields as appropriate, to help explore current or emerging issues or opportunities for library and archives professionals across the nation.</p> <p>Reports and other deliverables should be prepared for wide dissemination.</p> <p>You should demonstrate how you will achieve and measure far-reaching impact.</p>
<div>Community-Centered Implementation</div> <div>1-2 years</div>	<p>Community-Centered Implementation projects support the recruitment, education, training, and retention of current and future faculty or library and archives professionals by adapting existing models (practices, findings, tools, and/or partnerships) to a specific organizational context.</p> <p>You must identify and align your proposed work with an established model (standard, practice, toolkit, open-source software, or research finding). Your project should demonstrate how it is using or adapting what you have identified.</p> <p>Your project should share resources and lessons learned that can be used by library and archival professionals in other communities throughout the nation.</p> <p>Note: <i>An institution may only submit one LB21 application under the Community-Centered Implementation project type.</i></p>

Project Type	Project Characteristics
<div><div>National Implementation</div><div>1-3 years</div></div>	<div><p>National Implementation projects support the recruitment, development, and retention of current and future faculty, library, and archives professionals by developing or expanding tools, resources, products, or services for new audiences or in new contexts.</p><p>You should design your proposed work to ensure what is produced is easily adaptable, sustainable, and widely implemented across the field.</p><p>You should demonstrate how you will achieve and measure far-reaching impact.</p></div>

Project Type	Project Characteristics
<div>Early Career Research</div> <div>1-3 years</div>	<p>Early Career Research projects support untenured, tenure-track library and information science faculty, furthering the faculty member’s long-term research agenda, career trajectory, and professional development.</p> <p>You must include clearly articulated research questions.</p> <p>You should demonstrate how you will achieve and measure far-reaching impact.</p> <p>See further guidance in the Applied Research project type description below.</p> <p>Special eligibility:</p> <p>Your proposal must have a single Project Director with no co-Project Directors; you may include consultants, students, and post-doctoral scholars.</p> <p>The Project Director must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ hold a doctoral degree,✓ be untenured, tenure-track library and information science faculty,✓ have both teaching and research responsibilities, and✓ have not previously received funding support under any federal early career program. <p>Applicants must include a letter of departmental endorsement verifying the Project Director meets the above criteria.</p>

Project Type	Project Characteristics
<div>Applied Research</div> <div>1-3 years</div>	<p>Applied Research projects support the investigation of key questions relevant to library or archival professional practice, building on prior empirical, theoretical, or exploratory work in libraries and archives or other relevant disciplines.</p> <p>You must include clearly articulated research questions. Projects should also feature appropriate methods, including relevant theoretical or conceptual approaches, data collection, and analysis.</p> <p>Dissemination activities should occur throughout the period of performance and include activities beyond publishing journal articles and presenting at academic conferences to ensure far-reaching impact beyond just the academic research community. You should demonstrate how you will achieve and measure far-reaching impact.</p> <p>Proposals focused on evaluation or designed with a deterministic agenda are not appropriate for the Applied Research project type.</p>

Performance Measures

We use four performance measures as a basis for understanding how well the LB21 program is meeting its goals and how awardees are managing individual projects.



Effectiveness: The extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results of the LB21 program



Efficiency: How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used while generating maximum value for the target group



Quality: How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group



Timeliness: The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the timeframe proposed

You will need to provide a Performance Measurement Plan to describe how you will use these four performance measures to monitor and assess your performance in carrying out your project and meeting your selected [program goal and objective](#).



[Learn more about creating a Performance Measurement Plan](#)

Funding Restrictions

Allowable and Unallowable Costs

You may use IMLS funds and cost share only for allowable costs as found in IMLS and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) government-wide cost-principles rules.

Please consult [2 C.F.R. part 200](#) and [2 C.F.R. part 3187](#) for additional guidance on allowable costs.

The following lists include some examples of generally allowable costs and unallowable costs, both for IMLS funds and for cost share (if applicable), under this announcement.



Allowable Costs

- ✓ personnel salaries, wages, and fringe benefits, including annual cost of living increases
- ✓ travel expenses for key project staff and consultants
- ✓ materials, supplies, software, and equipment related directly to project activities
- ✓ adaptive and/or assistive technologies and other resources and services to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities
- ✓ participant support costs, including temporary dependent care, if documented in written policies
- ✓ third-party costs
- ✓ design and publication costs
- ✓ program evaluation
- ✓ staff and volunteer training
- ✓ paid internships/fellowships
- ✓ stipends or honoraria for project advisors and participants
- ✓ indirect or overhead costs
- ✓ pre-award costs, at the discretion of and with prior written approval from the agency.



Unallowable Costs

- ✗ general fundraising costs, such as development office staff or other staff time devoted to general fundraising
- ✗ contributions to endowments
- ✗ general operating support
- ✗ general advertising or public relations costs designed solely for promotional activities other than those related to the specific project
- ✗ construction or renovation of facilities (generally, any activity involving the construction trades is not an allowable cost)
- ✗ social activities, receptions, or entertainment.

You must [explain all proposed expenses in the Budget Justification.](#)

If you have questions about whether specific activities are allowable, [contact us for guidance](#).

Costs for Third Parties

When a project requires the payment of federal funds to third parties (such as partners, consultants, collaborators, vendors, and/or service providers), it is your responsibility to determine whether you should characterize a third party as a subrecipient or a contractor and include that determination in your agreement with them.

IMLS grant funds may not be provided to any Federal agency serving as a third party.



Learn more:

[2 C.F.R. § 200.1 for definitions of *contract*, *contractor*, *subaward*, and *subrecipient*](#)

[2 C.F.R. § 200.331 \(Subrecipient and contractor determinations\)](#).

Indirect Costs

You can choose to:

- use a rate not to exceed their current indirect cost rate already negotiated with a federal agency;
- use an indirect cost rate proposed to a federal agency for negotiation, but not yet finalized, as long as it is finalized by the time of the award;
- use a rate not to exceed 15 percent of the Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) if your organization currently does not have a Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and is not subject to other requirements; or
- not include any indirect costs.



See [Indirect Costs in the Budget](#)

Authorizing Statute and Regulations



Statute: [20 U.S.C. § 9101](#) et seq.; in particular, [§ 9165 \(Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program\)](#).

Regulations: [45 C.F.R. Chapter XI](#), [2 C.F.R. Chapter XXXI](#), and [2 C.F.R. Title 2](#)

Award recipients must follow the IMLS regulations that are in effect at the time of the award.

You can find the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance on Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) at [2 C.F.R. part 200](#).

With certain IMLS-specific additions, IMLS regulations at [2 C.F.R. part 3187](#) have formally adopted the Uniform Guidance.

Equal Opportunity

IMLS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age.

For further information, email ogc@imls.gov or write to the Office of the General Counsel, Institute of Museum and Library Services, 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000, Washington, DC, 20024-2135.



Prepare and Submit Your Application

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4. Application Contents and Format

Get Ready to Apply

Registration Requirements

Before you apply, your organization must have:

- ✓ a **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)** number;
- ✓ a current and active **System for Award Management (SAM)** registration; and
- ✓ an **active Grants.gov registration** with an approved Authorized Organization Representative (AOR).

Check your materials and registrations now to ensure that they are accurate, current, and active.

We strongly recommend that you obtain a UEI number and complete registration with SAM and Grants.gov well ahead of the application deadline.



See [Guidance for Required Registrations](#) for detailed information and resources to help you make sure your required registrations are complete and active by the time you're ready to apply.

Application Package

You must apply electronically through Grants.gov Workspace or a Grants.gov system-to-system solution.

Use one of the following identifiers to locate the application package in [Grants.gov](#):

- **Funding Opportunity Number:** LB21-FY26
- **Assistance Listing Number:** 45.313

To request an audio recording of this announcement, call 202-653-4744. To request a paper copy of this announcement, call 202-653-4744 or email imls-librarygrants@imls.gov.

Readiness Checklist

Applying for an award takes time. Registering with [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) can take several weeks. There are a few important things you'll need to do before you can apply.

Be sure to...

- ☐ [Review the eligibility requirements for this program](#) and confirm that your organization is eligible.
 - 1. Organization type
 - 2. Organization location
 - 3. Library eligibility criteria
 - 4. Special eligibility criteria
- ☐ [Review the Funding Restrictions](#) and keep them in mind as you develop your application and budget.
- ☐ Register in SAM.gov (or make sure your organization's registration is current) as early as possible. **Remember that SAM registration can take several weeks.**

To register, go to [SAM.gov Entity Registration](#) and click Get Started.

See the [SAM.gov Entity Registration checklist](#) for what you'll need to register in SAM.
- ☐ Get a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. You'll get your organization's UEI when you register in [SAM.gov](#).
- ☐ [Register in Grants.gov](#).
- ☐ Make sure you understand the [review criteria](#).
- ☐ Review the [post-award requirements](#) to make sure you can meet them.
- ☐ Find the application package. Go to [Grants.gov](#) and search for **Funding Opportunity Number: LB21-FY26** or **Assistance Listing Number: 45.313**
- ☐ Get familiar with [Grants.gov Workspace](#).
- ☐ [Contact an IMLS Program Officer](#) to discuss your ideas, or if you have questions related to the application process.

Prepare Your Application

This section outlines the components, format, and content requirements to help you prepare a complete application.

You must apply by **11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on March 13, 2026**. IMLS makes awards only to eligible applicants that submit applications through Grants.gov on or before this deadline. If your application is missing any Required Documents or Conditionally Required Documents from the list below, we will consider it to be incomplete, and may reject it from further consideration ([see 2 C.F.R. § 3187.9.](#)).

Application Components

Required Documents

You must include all these components for your application to be complete.

Component	File Requirements
The Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organizational Form (SF-424S)	Format: Grants.gov web form
IMLS Library – Discretionary Program Information Form	File Format: IMLS PDF form File Name: ProgramInfoForm.pdf
Narrative	File Format: PDF Page Limit: 10 pages max. File Name: Narrative.pdf
Schedule of Completion	File Format: PDF Page Limit: 1 page per year (recommended) File Name: Scheduleofcompletion.pdf

Component	File Requirements
<u>IMLS Budget Form</u>	File Format: IMLS PDF form File Name: Budget.pdf
<u>Budget Justification</u>	File Format: PDF File Name: Budgetjustification.pdf
<u>Resumes of Key Project Staff and Consultants</u>	File Format: PDF Page Limit: 2 pages each (recommended) File Name: Resumes.pdf
<u>Digital Products Plan</u>	File Format: PDF Page Limit: 2 pages (recommended) File Name: Digitalproduct.pdf
<u>Performance Measurement Plan</u>	File Format: PDF Page Limit: 2 pages (recommended) File Name: Perfmeasurement.pdf

Conditionally Required Documents

You must include these components if they are applicable to your institution or your project. [Refer to Conditionally Required Documents](#) to determine which, if any, you need to include in your application.

Component	File Requirements
<u>Proof of Private, Nonprofit Status</u>	File Format: PDF File Name: Proofnonprofit.pdf
<u>Proof of Foundation Status</u>	File Format: PDF File Name: Prooffoundation.pdf
<u>Final Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement</u>	File Format: PDF File Name: Indirectcostrate.pdf

Component	File Requirements
<u>Public Access Plan for Research Projects</u>	<p>File Format: PDF</p> <p>Page Limit: 2 pages (recommended)</p> <p>File Name: PublicAccess.pdf</p>
<u>Letter of Departmental Endorsement for an Early Career Research Proposal</u>	<p>File Format: PDF</p> <p>File Name: Endorsement.pdf</p>

Supporting Documents

You may include additional documents to support your proposal.

Component	File Requirements
<u>Supporting Documents</u>	<p>File Format: PDF</p> <p>File Name(s):</p> <p>Supportingdoc1.pdf</p> <p>Supportingdoc2.pdf</p> <p>Supportingdoc3.pdf</p>

Format, Name, and Sequence of Application Components

Document Format and File Size

Aside from the SF-424S which is created in Grants.gov Workspace, all application components must be submitted as PDF documents.

Use standard formatting and fonts in your application components and limit individual file sizes to 200mb or less.

Page Limits

Note the page limits listed in the [table of Application Components](#). We will remove any additional pages and not send them to reviewers as part of your application.

Naming Convention

Use the naming conventions indicated in the [tables of Application Components](#).



IMPORTANT: Attachment file names are limited to the following characters: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore (_), hyphen (-), space, period (.). If attachment file names use any other characters, the application may be rejected by Grants.gov.

Attachment Order

In Grants.gov, attach all application components in the sequence listed in the table above. Use all 15 fields in the “Attachments Form” first. If your application requires more than 15 attachments, select the “Other Attachments Form. Note that if you select the “Other Attachments Form,” you will be required to upload the 16th attachment in the “Mandatory Other Attachment” field first; any subsequent attachments should be uploaded under the “Optional Other Attachments.”

Instructions for Required Documents

Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organizational Form (SF-424S)

The SF-424S is part of the application package that you complete in Grants.gov Workspace. It collects basic information about your organization and your project.

IMLS Library – Discretionary Program Information Form

Download and complete the current [IMLS Library-Discretionary Program Information Form](#) (PDF, 1.7 MB). In it, we collect details about your project, its objective, and financial information.



Find detailed instructions to help you complete these Grants.gov forms:

- [Detailed instructions for completing the SF424S](#)
- [Detailed instructions for completing the IMLS Library – Discretionary Program Information Form](#)

Narrative

Write a Narrative using the structure and format below and save it as a PDF. Be clear and concise with a minimum of technical jargon and acronyms. Include references throughout your Narrative to any Supporting Documents that provide supplementary material.

When writing your narrative, consider the [review criteria](#).

Proposal Narrative - Required Format

Page Limit: 10 numbered pages

We will remove any additional pages and will not send them to reviewers as part of your application.

File Name: Narrative.pdf

IMPORTANT: Attachment file names are limited to the following characters: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore (_), hyphen (-), space, period (.). If attachment file names use any other characters, the application may be rejected by Grants.gov.

File Format: PDF



Font Size: 11-point or higher

Margins: 0.5 inches or greater

Components: Organize the Narrative using the following section headings:

- Introduction
- Project Justification
- Project Work Plan
- Project Results

Guidance for Narrative Sections

Narrative Section	Guidance
Introduction 	<p>In one paragraph, briefly summarize the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the name of the lead applicant organization; ○ the amount of IMLS funds requested and the amount of funds provided as cost share (if required); ○ the need, challenge, or opportunity your project will address; ○ the names of partner organizations; and ○ the intended project results. <p>Community-Centered Implementation projects must also identify the established model (standard, practice, toolkit, open-source software, or research finding) you are using.</p> <p>Early Career Research and Applied Research projects must also include clearly defined research question(s).</p>
Project Justification 	<p>Describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the need, challenge, or opportunity your proposal addresses and how it was identified; ○ how this project differs from, complements, builds upon, or adapts existing models, standards, theories, scholarship, or practice; and ○ who will benefit from the project and its results. <p>For Early Career Research: how this work fits within the Project Director's long-term research agenda.</p>

Narrative Section Guidance

Project Work Plan



Describe:

- the activities you will carry out and the sequence in which they will occur;
- who will plan, implement, and manage your project. Demonstrate that the identified staff, partners, and consultants have the experience and skills necessary to complete the work. Ensure all key staff are identified by name if possible;
- how you have involved stakeholders in the planning and development of the project and how you will incorporate their input throughout the project; and
- how you will evaluate and demonstrate impact.

For Applied Research and Early Career Research proposals only:

- the research question(s), methods, theoretical framing, and plans for analysis. Explain why these are appropriate for addressing the identified need, challenge, or opportunity and will ensure generalizability; and
 - if your study requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, explain the steps you have taken to secure IRB approval.
-

Project Results



Describe:

- the intended results and deliverables;
 - how they will address the need, challenge, or opportunity you identified;
 - how you will ensure they are readily adaptable, generalizable, and usable by other institutions and communities;
 - how you will disseminate them (e.g., conference presentations, workshops, or publications), to reach the intended beneficiaries; and
 - how you will sustain the benefits of your project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance.
 - **For Planning and Forum projects:** how results and deliverables will be used to inform future work.
-

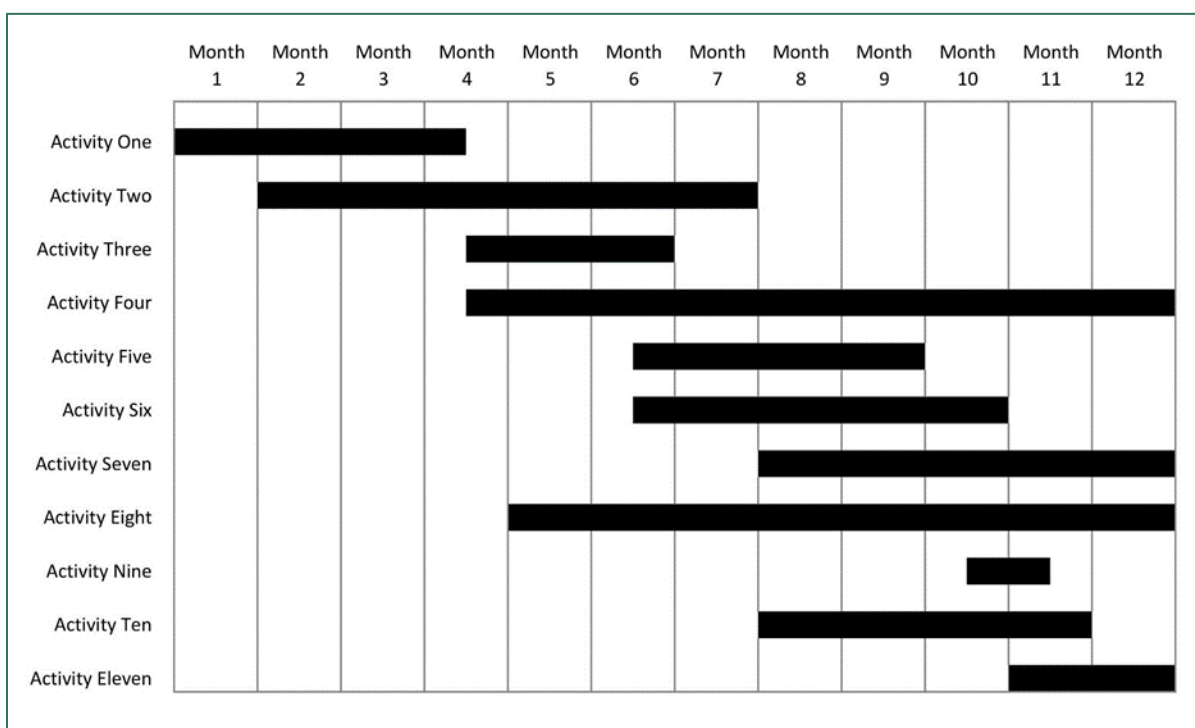
[Refer to the Evaluation Resources on the IMLS website](#) for program planning tools, evaluation definitions, and examples.

[Refer to our guidance on disclosing information in your application.](#)

Reviewers may also choose to visit your organization's website, as listed on the SF-424S form provided with your application.

Schedule of Completion

The Schedule of Completion should reflect each major activity identified in your application Narrative and the project dates identified on the SF-424S and the IMLS Budget Form. It should show when each major project activity will start and end. The schedule should be no longer than one page per project year. See the sample Schedule of Completion below. Save this document as a PDF.



IMLS Budget Form

Download and complete the current [IMLS Budget Form \(PDF, 1.67 MB\)](#).

Budget Justification

Write a Budget Justification to identify how each expense supports your proposed activities, detail how you calculated all costs, and provide supporting documentation including any dollar amounts that you may have consolidated and summarized on the IMLS Budget Form. We recommend that your Budget Justification have a section for each heading on the IMLS Budget Form. Save this document as a PDF.



Find detailed instructions to help you complete an IMLS Budget Form and write a Budget Justification:

- [Detailed instructions for completing the IMLS Budget Form](#)
- [Detailed instructions for writing a Budget Justification](#)

Resumes of Key Project Staff and Consultants

Provide a resume for each person whose expertise is essential to the success of the project. We recommend limiting each resume to two pages. Save all the resumes in a single PDF. You must include the resume of the [Project Director listed in Item 7 of the SF-424S](#). For research proposals, Project Directors are encouraged to include their Persistent Identifier (e.g. [ORCID](#)) near the top of their Resume.

If you cannot identify key project staff by the application deadline, then instead of a resume, provide position description(s) including the qualities, range of experience, and education necessary to successfully implement and complete project activities.

Digital Products Plan

We define digital products very broadly to include digital content (including but not limited to: software, PowerPoints, datasets, websites, white papers, and curricula). In your Digital Products Plan, address each of the following for each type of major digital output you will create during your project. We recommend limiting your plan to two pages. Save the document as a PDF.



See [Guidance for creating a Digital Products Plan](#).

- ✓ **Type:** What types of digital products will you create?
- ✓ **Availability:** How will you make your digital products openly available (as appropriate)?
- ✓ **Access:** What rights will you assert over your digital products, and what limitations, if any, will you place on their use? Will

your products implicate privacy concerns or cultural sensitivities, and if so, how will you address them?

- ✓ **Sustainability:** How will you ensure the sustainability of your digital products?

Performance Measurement Plan

Your Performance Measurement Plan should show how you will monitor and assess your performance as an awardee and achieve your selected [program goal and objective](#) from the perspectives of [Effectiveness, Efficiency, Quality, and Timeliness](#) for your overall project.

For each performance measure, identify what data you will collect from what source, the method you will use to collect it, and according to what schedule. The chart below provides sample statements for each measure and a space to record your own. [We've provided a fillable version of this chart](#) (DOCX, 25KB), which you are welcome, but not required, to use.

We recommend limiting your Performance Measurement Plan to two pages. Save your document as a PDF.

Performance Measure	Data We Will Collect (e.g., counts, costs, weights, volumes, temperatures, percentages, hours, observations, opinions, feelings)	Source of Our Data (e.g., members of the target group, project staff, stakeholders, internal/external documents, recording devices, databases)	Method We Will Use (e.g., survey, questionnaire, interview, focus group, informal discussion, observation, assessment, document analysis)	Schedule (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, beginning/end)
Effectiveness: The extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results	<p>Example: At the end of each month, using a report prepared by the registrar, we will compare the cumulative count of rehoused objects against the total number proposed for the project.</p> <p>Example: At the end of each project year, our external consultant will present results of the ongoing observation-based evaluation and compare them against our intended project results.</p>			
Efficiency: How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used while generating maximum value for the target group	<p>Example: Twice per year, we will assess our expenditures for program supplies on a per-person-served basis.</p> <p>Example: Each quarter, we will calculate the dollar value of volunteer hours contributed to the project as recorded in our online volunteer management system.</p>			
Quality: How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group	<p>Example: At the beginning, the mid-point, and end of the project, we will administer a satisfaction survey to staff who have participated in the training.</p> <p>Example: We will gather opinions about our online services through questionnaires provided to every 20th user.</p>			
Timeliness: The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe	<p>Example: Every six months, our Project Director will assess the fit between our proposed Schedule of Completion and actual activity completion dates.</p> <p>Example: Each quarter, each project partner will submit to our Project Director a templated report showing their progress on meeting project milestones.</p>			

Conditionally Required Documents

These documents may be required for your application, depending on the circumstances. Refer to the table below to determine which, if any, Conditionally Required Documents you may need to provide.

If you fail to provide a Conditionally Required Document, we will consider your application incomplete, and may reject it from further consideration.

If you are:	Then you must provide:	Notes:
<p>Applying as a private, nonprofit institution</p> <p><i>(as indicated by choosing “M” or “X” as the Applicant Type code in 5d of the SF-424S form).</i></p>	<p>A copy of the IRS letter indicating your eligibility for nonprofit status under the applicable provision of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended.</p>	<p>You must submit this letter with each application even if you have submitted it with other applications in the current year or in previous years.</p> <p>We will not accept a letter of State sales tax exemption as proof of nonprofit status.</p>
<p>Applying as a nonprofit foundation</p>	<p>A letter indicating that your foundation supports the specific library or archives, has the ability to administer the project, and can ensure compliance with the terms of this NOFO and the applicable law, including the IMLS Assurances and Certifications.</p>	<p>You must submit this letter with each application even if you have submitted it with other applications in the current year or in previous years.</p>
<p>Using a Federally negotiated indirect cost rate in your budget.</p>	<p>A copy of your current Final Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.</p>	<p>If you do not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect cost rate and elect to charge a de minimis rate of up to 15 percent of Modified Total Direct Costs (see 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.414(f)), you do not need to provide any documentation.</p>

If you are:	Then you must provide:	Notes:
Submitting an Early Career Research or an Applied Research project proposal.	<p>A Public Access Plan for Research Projects (two pages, recommended.)</p> <p>Explain how you will manage, share, preserve, document, and enable reuse of the research data and accompanying documentation you will create during the project.</p>	Refer to our guidance for creating a Public Access Plan for Research Projects
Submitting an Early Career Research project proposal.	A letter of departmental endorsement, verifying that the Project Director meets the Early Career Research project criteria .	<p>The Project Director must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hold a doctoral degree; be untenured, tenure-track, library and information science faculty; have both teaching and research responsibilities; and have not previously received funding support under any federal early career program.

([Back to Table of Application Components](#))

Supporting Documents

You may submit a reasonable number of optional Supporting Documents that supplement the Narrative in support of the project description. Optional Supporting Documents should help IMLS staff and reviewers envision the project in greater detail, but they should not be used to introduce new topics nor to continue answers to the Narrative questions. Give each document a clear, descriptive title at the top of the first page. You may wish to consider the following:

- Bibliography or references relevant to your proposed project design or evaluation strategy
- Letters of participation from partners, consultants, or others who will work closely with you on your project (avoid solely boiler-plate commitment letters)
- Letters of support from experts, stakeholders, or potential beneficiaries

- Brief explanation of the applicant institution's history, mission, governance structure, and community served
- Reports from planning activities
- Contractor quotes
- Equipment specifications
- Needs assessments or asset maps developed specifically for this project or community
- Example survey or interview questions

[\(Back to Table of Application Components\)](#)

Application Checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you have everything you need to submit a complete application.

General Readiness

- ☐ Review the [Readiness Checklist](#) and make sure your organization has a UEI, and that your SAM.gov and Grants.gov registrations are current and active.

Forms (follow form and Grants.gov instructions)

- ☐ [SF-424S](#)

Files

- ☐ [IMLS Library – Discretionary Program Information Form](#)
- ☐ [Narrative](#)
- ☐ [Schedule of Completion](#)
- ☐ [IMLS Budget Form](#)
- ☐ [Budget Justification](#)
- ☐ [Resumes of Key Project Staff and Consultants](#)
- ☐ [Digital Products Plan](#)
- ☐ [Performance Measurement Plan](#)
- ☐ Any [Conditionally Required Documents](#), if applicable
- ☐ [Supporting Documents](#), if any
- ☐ Double-check [format, file names, page limits, and attachment order](#) for all your PDF documents.

Disclosure of Information in Applications

We may share grant applications, products, and reports to further the mission of the agency and the development of museum, library, archival, and information services. As a general practice, and except for information that is privacy-protected, information contained in IMLS applications that receive funding may be made public. Please identify any information you deem confidential and/or proprietary and seek to have protected.

5. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

Submission Instructions

You must submit your applications for funding using [Grants.gov Workspace](#). Do not submit through email or postal mail to IMLS.

[Review the Registration Requirements and time frames](#). We strongly recommend that you obtain a UEI number, register with SAM.gov and Grants.gov, and complete and submit your application early. Leave plenty of time and use the contact information below to reach out to IMLS, the Federal Service Desk, or Grants.gov Help for questions and technical difficulties.

Programmatic, Administrative, and Technical Support Contacts

IMLS

[IMLS staff are available by phone and email](#) to answer programmatic and administrative questions relating to this grant program. We also host webinars to introduce potential applicants to funding opportunities. For more information, [see our list of webinars and instructions for accessing them](#).

Federal Service Desk

Visit the [Federal Service Desk](#) or call 1-866-606-8220 for questions about registering or renewing your registration with login.gov or SAM.gov. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time.

Grants.gov

Visit [Grants.gov Support](#), email support@grants.gov, or call Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 for assistance with software issues, registration issues, and technical

problems. Grants.gov Applicant Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except for federal holidays.

Be sure to obtain a case number when calling the Federal Service Desk or Grants.gov for support.

Submission Dates and Times

You must submit your applications for funding using Grants.gov Workspace. Do not submit through email or postal mail to IMLS.

For the LB21 Program, Grants.gov will accept applications through **11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on March 13, 2026**.

Grants.gov will create a date and time record when it receives the application. IMLS uses this timestamp to verify on-time application submission. The system will also generate a series of emails confirming the status of each application. Applicants can check the status of their application(s) in Grants.gov by using “[Track My Application](#).” For further details, visit [Check Application Status](#) at Grants.gov.

We will not consider late applications for funding. We award grants only to eligible applicants that submit complete applications on or before the deadline

Emergency Extensions

Under certain circumstances, we allow an extension of grant application deadlines for adversely affected applicant organizations located in counties listed in Emergency Declarations and/or Major Disaster Declarations. See [Application Deadlines](#) for further information.

Intergovernmental Review

This funding opportunity is not subject to intergovernmental review per Exec. Order No. 12372.



Learn About Application Review

In this step:

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6. Application Review Information

Eligibility and Completeness Checks

We assess every application to make sure it meets basic requirements for eligibility and completeness.

We won't consider an application that:

- does not meet [the eligibility criteria for the program](#)
- is submitted after the [deadline](#)
- requests funding outside of the [applicable range](#)
- does not adhere to the program's [funding restrictions](#) and [guidelines](#), and/or
- is missing [required or conditionally required application components](#).

If your application is rejected during these initial eligibility and completeness checks, we'll notify you by email. If you believe we rejected your application in error, you can appeal the decision via email within ten business days of the date we sent the rejection notice.

Review and Selection Process

We use a peer review process to evaluate all complete applications from eligible institutions. Reviewers are professionals in the field with relevant knowledge and expertise in the types of project activities identified in the applications.

We instruct reviewers to evaluate applications according to the peer review criteria detailed in the next section. Peer reviewers must comply with IMLS Federal ethics and conflicts of interest requirements.

The Director considers the input from the review process and makes final funding decisions consistent with the purposes of the agency's mission and programs.



Learn more about [our peer review process](#).

Peer Review Criteria

We instruct reviewers to evaluate applications according to the review criteria listed in this section and to consider all Required, Conditionally Required, and Supporting Documents.

Cost share is an eligibility criterion and is not considered in the review of applications. Learn more about [cost share requirements for LB21](#).

Review Criteria

Project Justification



- Is the need, challenge, or opportunity identified by the applicant clearly described and supported by relevant data, research, and current practice?
 - Does the applicant clearly articulate how the proposed work or research differs from, complements, builds upon, or adapts existing model(s), standard(s), theorie(s), scholarship, or practice?
 - Has the applicant appropriately described and justified who will benefit from the project and its results?
 - **For Community-Centered Implementation proposals:** Does the proposal identify an existing model (standard, practice, toolkit, open-source software, or research finding) that they will adapt to their local context?
 - **For Early Career Research proposals:** How well does the Project Director describe their long-term research agenda, and does the proposed research fit within that agenda?
-

Review Criteria

Project Work Plan



- Will the work plan lead to the promised results? Are the resources identified appropriate for the scope and scale of the project? How could they be improved? See also [Schedule of Completion](#) and [Budget](#) documents.
- How has the work plan incorporated the perspectives and contributions of stakeholders through external input, validation, and/or consensus building activities?
- Has evaluation been included, where appropriate?
- Do the identified staff, partners, and consultants possess the experience and skills necessary to complete the work? See [Resumes of Key Project Staff and Consultants](#).
- **For Community-Centered Implementation projects:** Does the work plan demonstrate how the identified model will be used or adapted to a local context?

For Applied Research and Early Career Research projects:

- Will the proposed research questions and theoretical framing address the identified need, challenge, or opportunity? How could they be improved?
 - Are the selected methods for data identification, collection, and analysis appropriate for the project? How could they be improved?
 - Is the approach to securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval appropriate?
-

Review Criteria

Project Results



- How well will the project results address the identified need, challenge, or opportunity?
 - Are project deliverables readily adaptable, generalizable, and usable by other institutions and communities?
 - How well does the dissemination and communication plan demonstrate outreach, including but not limited to intended beneficiaries?
 - Is the plan to sustain the benefits of the project reasonable and practical?
 - Does the [Digital Products Plan](#) reflect an adequate understanding of appropriate practices and standards for creating and managing the types of digital products proposed?
 - **For Applied Research and Early Career Research projects:** Does the [Public Access Plan for Research Projects](#) reflect an adequate understanding of managing, sharing, preserving, documenting, and enabling reuse of the information and research products created during this project?
 - **For Planning and Forum projects:** Is it clear how the project results will lead to future work?
-

Risk Assessment

For federal awards with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, we're required to review and consider applicant information in the designated integrity and performance system.

This information is accessible through SAM. The simplified acquisition threshold is currently \$350,000 but is periodically adjusted.

You may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about your organization that a federal awarding agency previously entered.

We will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in considering the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants.



Learn more about the laws and regulations related to suspension and debarment systems, the simplified acquisition threshold, and applicant risk review:

- [41 U.S.C. § 2313](#)
- [41 U.S.C. § 134](#)
- [20 C.F.R. 200.206](#)
- [2 C.F.R. Part 3185](#)

7. Award Notices

We will not release information about the status of an application until we have completed the peer review process and all deliberations.

We expect to notify successful and unsuccessful applicants of final funding decisions by email in August 2026.

Funded Applicants

If your application is funded, we'll send your Authorizing Official, Project Director, and Grant Administrator an email notification with our congratulations and instructions for accessing our electronic grants management system, eGMS Reach. Once you activate your eGMS Reach account, you'll have access to your Official Award Notification, award letter, reporting schedule, IMLS-approved budget document, and anonymized reviewer feedback from your application's peer review.



The signed Official Award Notification is the only document obligating funds and authorizing you to begin performance on its specified dates. Unless you've confirmed and received prior written approval from us that pre-award costs are allowed, incurring those costs before the period of performance is at your own risk.

Unfunded Applicants

If your application is not funded, we'll send your Authorizing Official, Project Director, and Grant Administrator an email notification to let you know that your application isn't being funded. We'll share the number of applications and the total of requested funding we received for the program this year. We'll also provide anonymized reviewer comments and scores to help you understand the decision and help you decide whether to revise the proposal and submit it again to IMLS or another funding agency in the future.



Find Post-Award Information

In this step:

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8. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

There are important laws and regulations you'll need to understand and comply with if you receive an award. Awardees are subject to:

- [2 C.F.R. part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#),
- [2 C.F.R. part 3187 \(IMLS grant regulations\)](#);
- The [IMLS General Terms and Conditions for IMLS Discretionary Grant and Cooperative Agreement Awards](#) (PDF, 460KB); and
- The [IMLS Assurances and Certifications](#).

With certain IMLS-specific additions, IMLS regulations at [2 C.F.R. part 3187](#) have formally adopted the Uniform Guidance.

Reporting

Awardees must comply with the following reporting requirements.

Interim and final financial and performance reports are due according to the reporting schedule in your official award documents. You must submit your performance and financial reports in eGMS Reach. We may publish interim and final performance report content on the IMLS website.

You must also comply with [2 C.F.R. §§ 180](#) and [2 C.F.R. part 3185](#) with respect to providing information regarding all debarment, suspension, and related offenses, as applicable.

If the total value of your active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from all Federal agencies exceeds \$10,000,000 for any period of time during the period of performance of this Federal award, [you should refer to the reporting requirements reflected in 2 C.F.R. part 200, Appendix XII – Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.](#)

See also: [2 C.F.R. §§ 200.113 \(Mandatory disclosures\)](#) and [2 C.F.R. §§ 200.211\(c\)\(1\)\(iii\) \(Information contained in a federal award\).](#)



Visit our [Manage Your Award – Grant Administration page](#) to learn more about reporting requirements



Other Information

In this section:

9. Other Important Information

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9. Other Important Information

IMLS Assurances and Certifications

Applicants for federal funds must certify that they are responsible for complying with certain nondiscrimination, debarment and suspension, drug-free workplace, and lobbying laws.

These are set out in more detail, along with other requirements, in the [IMLS Assurances and Certifications](#).

By submitting the application, which includes the [IMLS Assurances and Certifications](#), you certify that you are in compliance with these requirements and that you will maintain records and submit any reports that are necessary to ensure compliance. Failure to comply with these statutory and regulatory requirements may result in the suspension or termination of an award and require that the recipient return funds to the government.

For information about award termination, please see the [IMLS General Terms and Conditions for IMLS Discretionary Grant and Cooperative Agreement Awards](#) and [2 C.F.R. § 200.340 Termination](#).

Acknowledging IMLS Support

Awardees must include acknowledgement of IMLS support in all grant products, publications, websites, and presentations developed with IMLS funding.

All work products should reference IMLS and include the associated award number(s). [Our Grantee Communications Kit](#) provides guidance for fulfilling these requirements.

Conflict of Interest Requirements

Awardees must follow IMLS conflict of interest policies for federal awards. You must disclose in writing any potential conflict of interest to an IMLS Program Officer, or to the pass-through entity if you are a subrecipient or contractor. This disclosure must take place immediately whether you are an applicant or have an active IMLS award.

The IMLS conflict of interest policies apply to subawards as well as contracts, and are as follows:

- You must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the performance of your employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of subawards and contracts.
- None of your employees may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a subaward or contract supported by a federal award if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest. Such a conflict of interest would arise when the employee, officer, agent, board member, or any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties indicated herein, has a financial or other interest in or a tangible personal benefit from an organization considered for a subaward or contract. The officers, employees, agents, and board members of your organization must neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from subrecipients or contractors or parties to subawards or contracts.
- If you have a parent, affiliate, or subsidiary organization that is not a state, local, or tribal government, you must also maintain written standards of conduct covering organizational conflicts of interest. Organizational conflicts of interest means that because of relationships with a parent company, affiliate, or subsidiary organization, you are unable or appear to be unable to be impartial in conducting a subaward or procurement action involving a related organization.

Additional Information about IMLS

Visit the [IMLS website](#) for additional information on IMLS and IMLS activities.

IMLS Obligations to Make Awards

This announcement does not obligate IMLS to make any federal award or commitment.

Peer Review

Any individual who is interested in serving as a peer reviewer is welcome to enter their contact information and identify their experience and expertise through the IMLS [online reviewer application portal](#). IMLS staff will notify the individuals who are identified as potential reviewers by email prior to the next review period to confirm availability.

Copyright Information

Awardees may copyright any work that is subject to copyright and was developed under an award or for which ownership was acquired under a federal award. IMLS reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for federal purposes and to authorize others to do so. For additional information, [please see 2 C.F.R. § 200.315 \(Intangible property\)](#).

Application Completion Time

Complete applications include the elements listed in the [Table of Application Components for applications](#). We estimate the average amount of time needed for one applicant to complete the narrative portion to be 45 hours. This includes the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and writing and reviewing the answers.

We estimate that it will take an average of 30 minutes per response for the IMLS Library Discretionary Program Information Form and three hours per response for the IMLS Budget Form.

We welcome your suggestions for improving this collection of information and for making it as easy to use as possible. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to [our Office of Grants Management](#). Please note that applicants are not required to respond to any collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number.

PRA Clearance Number

OMB Control No.: 3137-0091, Expiration date: 7/31/2027



Additional Guidance

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Guidance for Required Registrations

Getting a Unique Entity Identifier

The Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number is a non-proprietary alphanumeric identifier assigned to all entities (public and private companies, individuals, institutions, or organizations) who register to do business with the Federal Government. The UEI is requested in, and assigned by, the System for Award Management (SAM). Awardees must inform any first-tier subrecipients that the awardee may not make a subaward unless the subrecipient has also obtained a UEI. First tier subrecipients, but not second-tier subrecipients nor contractors, are required to obtain a UEI. Subrecipients are not required, however, to complete full registration in SAM.gov to obtain their UEI.

If your organization has an active SAM registration, you can find your assigned UEI in your SAM record. The organization's UEI must be active at the time of application and award. If you don't yet have an active SAM registration, you will receive a UEI when you register in SAM.

[Learn more about the UEI.](#)

Registering with SAM

The System for Award Management (SAM) is a federal repository that centralizes information about grant applicants and awardees. It is always free to all users. You must register with SAM before registering with Grants.gov. [Learn how to check an organization's registration status in SAM.](#)

If you're registering with SAM for the first time, you must begin by creating a SAM user account through [Login.gov](#). [Click here to learn how to create a secure Login.gov account.](#) Then [proceed to the SAM registration process.](#)

We recommend that you allow several weeks to complete the SAM registration.

You must always maintain an active SAM registration with current information while you have an active award or an application under consideration. We may not make an award to you until you have complied with all applicable Unique Entity Identifier and SAM registration requirements. If you have not fully complied with the requirements by the time we're ready to make a federal award, we may make an award to another applicant.

You must renew your organization's registration in SAM at least every 12 months or whenever your organization's information changes. An expired registration will prevent you

from submitting applications via Grants.gov and receiving awards or payments. Award payments will be made to the bank account that is associated with your organization's SAM registration.

Registering with Grants.gov

[Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) is the centralized website for grant seekers to find and apply for federal funding opportunities. Grants.gov is owned and operated by the Federal Government and is always free to all users.

You must [register with Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) prior to applying. The multistep registration process cannot be completed in a single day. You should make sure your institution's SAM registration is current and active before registering with Grants.gov. If your organization is not already registered, allow several weeks before the application deadline to complete this one-time process. **Do not wait until the day of the application deadline to register.**

The Grants.gov user ID and password you obtain when you register are required to submit your application.

After your organization registers with Grants.gov and creates an Organizational Applicant Profile, the request for the organization's Grants.gov roles and access is sent to the eBiz POC. The eBiz POC will then log into Grants.gov and assign the appropriate roles to individuals within the organization. This will include the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) which will give permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization.



TIP: Designating more than one Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) when you register in Grants.gov will help avoid last-minute crises if a single AOR is unavailable when you are ready to submit the application. It is also important to update the contact information and password in Grants.gov whenever an AOR changes.

Visit [Grants.gov/Support](https://www.grants.gov/Support), email support@grants.gov, or call Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 for technical assistance. Grants.gov Applicant Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except for federal holidays.

Guidance for Completing Forms and Other Application Components

Grants.gov Forms

SF-424S Form

The SF-424S Form, or the Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organizational Form, is part of the application package in Grants.gov.

SF-424S Item	Instructions
Items 1 - 4	Grants.gov automatically populates items 1-4.

Item 5. Applicant Information

- a **Legal Name:** Enter your organization's legal name as it appears in your SAM registration. This is the organization with the authority to apply directly for funding in this program. If you have an organizational unit that will be carrying out the project, be sure to specify it as the organizational unit on the [IMLS Library – Discretionary Program Information Form](#).
- b **Address:** Enter your legal applicant's address as it appears in your SAM registration.
- c **Web Address:** Enter the URL of your organization's website.
- d **Type of Applicant:** Select the code that best characterizes your organization from the menu in the first dropdown box. Leave the other boxes blank.
- e **Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN):** Enter the EIN or TIN assigned to your organization by the Internal Revenue Service.
- f **Organizational UEI:** Enter your organization's Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). If your organization's SAM registration is active, you can find your assigned UEI in your SAM record. If you cannot locate your UEI, contact the Federal Service Desk at www.fsd.gov or 1-866-606-8220.
- g **Congressional District:** Enter your organization's congressional district.

Use the following format: two-letter state abbreviation, followed by a hyphen, followed by a zero, followed by the two-digit district number. For example, if the organization is located in the 5th Congressional District of California, enter "CA-005." For the 12th Congressional District of North Carolina, enter "NC-012."

For states and territories with "At Large" Congressional Districts—that is, one representative or delegate represents the entire state or territory—use "001," e.g., "VT-001." If your organization does not have a congressional district (e.g., it is located in a U.S. territory that does not have districts), enter "00-000." To determine your organization's district, [visit the House of Representatives website](#) and use the "Find Your Representative" tool.

SF-424S Item

Instructions

Item 6. Project Information


- a

Project Title: Enter a brief descriptive title for your project, using no more than 200 characters, including spaces. IMLS may use this title for public information purposes.
- b

Project Description: Enter a brief description (about 120 words) of your project. Tell us about the purpose of the project, the activities to be performed, the deliverables and expected outcomes, and the intended beneficiaries. Use clear language that can be understood by readers who might not be familiar with the discipline or subject area. IMLS may use or revise this project description for public information purposes.
- o

Proposed Project Start Date/End Date: Enter the start date (09/01/2026) and end date of the proposed period of performance in the format mm/dd/yyyy. The project period begins on the first day of the month in which project activities start and ends on the last day of the month in which these activities are completed. Refer to [the Award Overview](#) to determine when your project can begin.

NOTE: We use [Login.gov](#) for user authentication in our electronic grants management system, eGMS Reach. Login.gov helps protect user identity through stronger passwords and two-factor authentication.



Login.gov requires that the email addresses entered for the Project Director, Primary Contact/Grants Administrator, and Authorized Representatives in Items 7, 8, and 9 on the SF-424S Form be unique to those individuals. General email addresses or those used by several people in a single office are not acceptable.

Item 7. Project Director

The Project Director will have primary responsibility for carrying out your project’s activities. Enter the requested information for this individual here.

We require that the Project Director be a different person than the Authorized Representative.

SF-424S Item

Instructions

Item 8. Primary Contact/Grants Administrator

The Primary Contact/Grants Administrator has the core responsibility for administering the award. Enter the requested information for this individual here.

Please still complete both items 8 and 9 if the Primary Contact/Grants Administrator is the same as the Authorized Representative.

In some organizations this individual may be the same as the Project Director. If this is the case, check the box and skip to Item 9.

Item 9. Authorized Representative

The Authorized Representative has the authority to legally bind your organization. Enter the requested information for this individual here. **The Authorized Representative cannot be the same person as the Project Director.**

By checking the “**I Agree**” box at the top of Item 9, this individual certifies the applicant’s compliance with the [IMLS Assurances and Certifications](#) and any other relevant federal requirements.

Grants.gov automatically populates the “Signature of Authorized Representative” and “Date Signed” boxes upon submission of the application. This is the person whose name was listed as your organization’s authorized representative when you registered with Grants.gov.

Please note that this name might not be the same as the name and other information you entered in Item 9 above.

By submitting the electronic application, you acknowledge that your organization certifies compliance with relevant federal requirements, including but not limited to the [IMLS Assurances and Certifications](#), to the same extent as a signature does on a paper application.

IMLS Library – Discretionary Program Information Form (PIF)

Make sure that JavaScript is enabled in your web browser. Download the [IMLS Library - Discretionary Program Information Form](#) (PDF, 1.7 MB) to your computer and work on it outside your web browser. When you've completed the form, save it as a PDF and upload it as part of your application through Grants.gov.

PIF Section	Instructions
Section 1. Grant Program	Select Laura Bush 21 st Century Librarian Program. Then select one project type. Refer to Project Types for more information and to help you select the right project type for your application.
Grant Program Goals and Objectives	Refer to the LB21 Program Goals and Objectives. Select the LB21 program goal that best aligns with your proposed project. Once you have selected a goal, select one associated objective.
Section 2. Applicant Information	Does this entity have an organizational unit that will carry out the activities described in your application? Refer to the entity listed in Item 5a of the Grants.gov SF-424S Form that you are submitting with your application and review the Helpful Definitions of organizational unit and legal applicant on the Program Information Form. Then select YES if your organization has an organizational unit and NO if it does not. Next, make selections from the choices and provide the information requested.
Section 3. Financial Information	Provide the information requested in items a-d. If you named an organizational unit in Section 1 of this form, this information must pertain to that unit. Please complete the table with figures representing the most recently completed fiscal year in the top row, followed by those for the previous year, and concluding with those for the year before that.

PIF Section	Instructions
Section 4. Funding Request	Refer to the Grant Fund and Cost Share totals in Section 10 of the IMLS Budget Form (PDF, 1.67MB) that you are submitting with your application. Provide the amount in dollars that you are requesting from IMLS and the amount of non-federal funding you are providing as cost share/match. Enter “0” if your budget includes no cost share/match.
Section 5. Indirect Costs	Refer to the IMLS Budget Form – Indirect Costs in the Budget guidance . Select one option and provide any required information for your selection. Your selection should match the choice you make on your IMLS Budget Form.
Section 6. Abstract	<p>Write an Abstract of no more than 3,000 characters (including spaces) in a concise narrative format for experts as well as a general audience. Address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Identify the lead applicant and, if applicable, any collaborators.● Describe the need, problem, or challenge your project will address, and how it was identified.● List the high-level activities you will carry out and identify the associated time frame.● Identify who or what will benefit from your project.● Specify your project’s intended results and how they will be disseminated.● Describe how you will measure your success in achieving your intended results. <p>Enter or paste your text into the form.</p>

IMLS Budget Form

Make sure that JavaScript is enabled in your web browser. Download the [IMLS Budget Form \(PDF, 1.67 MB\)](#) to your computer and work on it outside your web browser. When you've completed the form, save it as a PDF and upload it as part of your application through Grants.gov.

The IMLS Budget Form accommodates up to three years of project activities and expenses. Project timelines, allowable costs, and other budget details vary by program. Be sure to review the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program/project type to which you are applying and the cost principles in 2 C.F.R. part 200 and 2 C.F.R. part 3187.

The Year 1 columns should include costs for activities that begin on the project start date (as listed on 6c of the SF-424S) and end 12 months later. If the project timeline exceeds one year, list the costs for the next 12 months in the Year 2 columns. If the project extends beyond two years, list the costs for the next 12 months in the Year 3 columns.



Learn more about the regulations and requirements related to cost principles for federal awards:

- [2 C.F.R. 200 Subpart E - Cost Principles](#)
- [2 C.F.R. part 3187 Subpart C Allowable Costs](#)

Tips for completing your budget form:



- The budget should include the project costs that will be charged to grant funds as well as those that will be supported by cost share, if any.
- In-kind contributions to cost share may include the value of services (e.g., donated volunteer or consultant time) or equipment donated to the project between the authorized start and end dates of your project.
- All the items listed, whether supported by grant funds or cost share, must be necessary to accomplish project objectives, allowable according to the applicable federal cost principles, auditable, and incurred during the award period of performance.
- Charges to the project for items such as salaries, fringe benefits, travel, and contractual services must conform to the written policies and established practices of your organization.
- You must report all revenues generated with project funds during the award period of performance as program income.

- If you need more lines for a specific section, summarize the information in the IMLS Budget Form and explain it further in the Budget Justification.

Budget Form Section	Instructions
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1. Salaries and Wages	
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	Include both temporary and permanent staff as well as volunteers engaged in project activities. Document how you calculated salaries and wages in your Budget Justification by including the base salary or wages for each person and the percentage of time each person is allocated to the project activities, which may be shown as a percentage of time, number or days, or number of hours.
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2. Fringe Benefits	
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	Fringe benefits can be claimed as a direct cost for only those positions included in your direct cost pool and only on the portion of salaries and wages identified for this project. Indicate your organization's fringe benefit rate (in percent) and the base (in dollars) to which the rate is applied (e.g., 20% x \$175,089.00).
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3. Travel	
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	Explain how you calculated each travel cost, including subsistence, lodging, and transportation, in your Budget Justification.
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	You must use the lowest available commercial fares for coach or equivalent accommodations, and you must use U.S. flagged air carriers for foreign travel when such services are available, in accordance with applicable U.S. legal requirements.
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4. Supplies, Materials, and Equipment	
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	List the costs of supplies, materials, and equipment purchased specifically for the proposed project. For definitions and other information, please see 2 C.F.R. part 200 . Use the Budget Justification to explain or describe these items in further detail.
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Budget Form Section	Instructions
5. Subawards and Contracts	List each third party that will undertake project activities and their associated costs as an individual line item on your IMLS Budget Form. Designate each third party as either a subaward or a contract using the dropdown menu on each line. Itemize these third-party costs in your Budget Justification.
6. Student Support	If your project includes Student Support costs, enter them in this section. Refer to Student Support Costs in the Budget for a definition and examples.
7. Other Costs	Use this section for costs that cannot be assigned to other categories. Do not use this section to list items that do not fit in the lines allotted for another section.
8. Total Direct Costs	These amounts will total automatically.
9. Indirect Costs	Indirect costs are expenses that are incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be easily identified with a particular project. Indicate your organization's indirect cost rate (in percent) and the base (in dollars) to which the rate is applied (e.g., 34% x \$123,456.78). Refer to Indirect Costs in the Budget for more information.
10. Total Project Costs	These amounts will total and round up to the nearest dollar automatically.

Cost Share in the Budget

Cost share is the portion of the project costs that is not paid by IMLS funds. Common examples of cost share include cash outlays; contribution of property and services; and in-kind contributions, such as staff or volunteer time that support project activities.

In this grant program, National Implementation project proposals requesting more than \$299,999 must include at least a 1:1 cost share from non-federal sources. To calculate the

minimum required cost share, subtract Student Support costs (direct costs only) from the total requested IMLS funds (direct and indirect costs).

All expenses, including cost share, must be incurred during the award period of performance unless otherwise specified and allowed by law. Federal funds from other federal awards may not be used for cost share. All federal, IMLS, and program requirements regarding the use of funds apply to both requested IMLS funds and to cost share. See [2 C.F.R. §§ 200.1 and 200.306](#) for more information on cost share.

Indirect Costs in the Budget

Indirect costs are expenses incurred for common or joint objectives and thus cannot be readily associated with a particular project. Some examples include depreciation on buildings and equipment, the costs of operating and maintaining facilities, and general administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting. [See 2 C.F.R. § 200.414 for additional guidance on indirect costs.](#)

Options for Calculating and Including Indirect Costs in a Project Budget

You can choose to:

- use a rate not to exceed your current indirect cost rate already negotiated with a federal agency;
- use an indirect cost rate proposed to a federal agency for negotiation but not yet finalized, as long as it is finalized by the time of the award;
- use a rate not to exceed 15 percent of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) if the organization currently does not have a Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and is not subject to other requirements; or
- not include any indirect costs.

Using a Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement

A Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) is a document that reflects an estimate of indirect costs negotiated between the Federal Government and a non-federal organization. There are several types of indirect cost rates (e.g., Provisional, Predetermined, Fixed, Final), and some agreements identify several locations to which a particular rate applies (e.g., on-site/campus, off-site/campus), and/or program types for which a particular rate may be used (e.g., Instruction, Organized Research, All Programs, Other Sponsored Activities).

If your organization already has a NICRA in effect, you may use one of the approved rates in the calculation of your project's indirect costs and by extension, your total project costs, if you apply the appropriate rate and include a copy of the current agreement with your grant application. You may choose to use a rate lower than a rate in your agreement, but you may not choose a higher one. We will accept only those NICRAs that are current by the award date.

Carefully review your institution's negotiated indirect cost rate(s) to make sure you are using the appropriate rate for your project.



*For the LB21 Program, we will only accept the Research rate in your IMLS project budget if your selected Project Type is **Applied Research or Early Career Research**. [See Project Types for more information](#).*

Please be aware that the indirect cost rate used in your approved IMLS budget (and that will also appear on the Official Award Notification if you receive an award) will apply throughout the life of your award. You may not use a different rate for the award, even if you negotiate a new rate with your cognizant agency after the award has begun.

Using a Proposed Indirect Cost Rate

If your organization is currently negotiating a NICRA with a federal agency, you may use the indirect cost rate proposed to the federal agency to estimate indirect and total project costs. In such situations, if we issue an award, we will accept the rate only if the negotiations are final by the award date and you submit a copy of the final agreement to us. IMLS staff will work with you to adjust your budget prior to issuing an award.

Using the 15 Percent De Minimis Indirect Cost Rate

You may choose to charge a de minimis rate of up to 15 percent of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC), as long as you do not have a current NICRA and you meet the applicable requirements. [See 2 C.F.R. part 200](#), including [2 C.F.R. §§ 200.1 \(Definitions\)](#), [200.414\(f\)](#), and [200.510\(b\)\(6\)](#) for additional guidance.

Modified Total Direct Costs include:

- all direct salaries and wages,
- applicable fringe benefits,
- materials and supplies,
- services,
- travel, and
- up to the first \$50,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award).

Modified Total Direct Costs exclude:

- equipment,
- capital expenditures,
- charges for patient care,
- rental costs,
- tuition remission,
- scholarships and fellowships,
- participant support costs, and
- the portion of each subaward in excess of \$50,000.

Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

If you are using the up to 15 percent de minimis indirect cost rate, check the box indicated on the IMLS Budget Form. No additional documentation is required.

Applying an Indirect Cost Rate to the Cost Share Portion of a Budget

You may, if consistent with 2 C.F.R. part 200 (Uniform Guidance), apply your indirect cost rate to your total direct costs covered by cost share, but you must account for any costs you claim as cost share in the cost share column on the IMLS Budget Form. IMLS funds can be used for indirect costs, but only for the portion of the total direct costs for which you are requesting IMLS funds (the Grant Funds column). ([See, for example, 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.412-414.](#))

Restrictions on Project Costs Included in Indirect Cost Calculations

If you have a current NICRA, you must follow its conditions and requirements.

As noted above, if you do not have a current NICRA and meet applicable requirements, you may elect to charge a de minimis rate of up to 15 percent of the Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) in your indirect cost calculations.

If you have a current NICRA with a rate of less than 15 percent, you must use it rather than the de minimis rate in your indirect cost calculations.

Please see the section above on the up to 15 percent de minimis rate as well as [2 C.F.R. § 200.414\(f\)](#) and [§ 200.1 Definitions](#).

Student Support Costs in the Budget

Students are:

- Individuals enrolled in a middle school, high school, community college, undergraduate, or graduate program of study
- Individuals participating in post-master's or post-doctoral programs that are focused on supporting their careers or professional development
- Library, archives, and museum staff participating in education and training activities focused on their careers or professional development

Examples of Student Support include:

- Tuition support for students participating in the project
- Salaries or stipends for graduate assistant work, if their work is focused on research and teaching activities (therefore contributing to their education)
- Pay and benefits for a resident or fellow to work in a position that is intended to support their learning outcomes or professional development
- Costs for travel and conference registration provided to support a student or participant's learning outcomes or professional development
- Costs of supplies and equipment provided to students to support a student's learning outcomes or professional development

Activities not considered Student Support include:

- Students employed in roles that are primarily administrative or clerical, doing work that is not primarily focused on their career or professional development. These costs should be listed in the Salaries and Wages section of the budget, and tuition paid on behalf of these students would not be considered Student Support.

See [2 C.F.R. § 200.466 \(Scholarships and student aid costs\)](#); see also [2 C.F.R. § 200.430 \(Compensation – personal services\)](#).

Budget Justification

To write your Budget Justification, follow the IMLS Budget Form's section headings to organize the document and save it as a PDF. Address both grant funds and cost share, if included. Do not use your Budget Justification to expand your narrative.

Budget Section

Instructions

1. Salaries and Wages

- Identify each person whose salary or wages will be paid with IMLS funds or by cost share, provide their names, and describe their role in the project.
 - Document how you calculated salaries and wages by including the base salary or wages for each person and the percentage of time each person is allocated to the project activities, which may be shown as a percentage of time, number of days, or number of hours.
 - If cost share is being provided by unpaid volunteers, explain how you arrived at the dollar amount used to represent the value of their services.
 - For new staff positions included in this project, provide information on how the estimated salary and wages align with industry standards and prevailing wages for your local area.
-

2. Fringe Benefits

- Identify your organization's fringe benefit rate (in percent) and the base (in dollars) to which the rate is applied for each person.
 - If you have consolidated several persons' fringe benefits into a single line on the IMLS Budget Form, break out the detail here.
-

Budget Section

Instructions

3. Travel

- For each trip, explain the purpose of the trip and specify the points of origin and destination, the number of travelers, and break out the costs of transportation, lodging, per diem, and any other expenses associated with the travel. Explain how you arrived at these dollar amounts.
- If the destination of a trip is not yet determined, please use a reasonable flight average (or example) destination to determine the budgeted cost of transportation.

4. Supplies, Materials, and Equipment

- List each type of supply, material, and equipment you propose to purchase or provide as cost share for the project.
 - Detail the number and unit cost for each item and explain how you arrived at the dollar amounts.
 - Provide vendor quotes or price lists as Supporting Documents with your application.
-

Budget Section	Instructions
5. Subawards and Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">List the costs of project activities to be undertaken by third parties for the project (familiar terms for third parties can include partners, consultants, subgrantees, contractors, collaborators, vendors, and service providers).Identify each third party by name, describe their role in the project, the activities they will carry out, and the cost.For each entry, designate the third party as either a subrecipient (who receives a subaward) or a contractor (who receives a contract)*.Explain costs for third parties and provide relevant Supporting Documents with your application. IMLS grant funds generally may not be provided to other U.S. government agencies. <p>*You are responsible for making a case-by-case determination as to whether the agreement you make with a third party should be a subaward or a contract. That determination will depend upon the nature of your relationship with the third party with respect to the activities to be carried out. See 2 C.F.R. § 200.331 (Subrecipient and contractor determinations).</p>
6. Student Support	Explain your method for calculating the costs listed in this section. See the definition and examples of Student Support.
7. Other Costs	Use this section for costs that cannot be assigned to other categories.
8. Total Direct Costs	Indicate the total direct costs and specify how much you are asking from IMLS and how much you intend to provide as cost share, if any.
9. Indirect Costs	If you include indirect costs in your project budget, identify the indirect cost rate (in percent) and the base (in dollars) to which the rate is applied. Read about indirect costs in the Budget.

Budget Section

Instructions

10. Total Project Costs

Indicate the total project costs here and specify how much you are asking from IMLS and how much you intend to provide as cost share, if any.

Proof of Private, Nonprofit Status

An organization applying as a private, nonprofit institution must submit a copy of the letter from the Internal Revenue Service indicating its eligibility for nonprofit status under the applicable provision of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended. ([See 2 C.F.R. § 3187.7\(b\).](#)) IMLS will not accept a letter of state sales tax exemption as proof of nonprofit status.

Digital Products Plan

We are committed to expanding public access to digital products created using federal funds. We ask each applicant to create and submit a Digital Products Plan describing how you will address specific aspects of creating and managing digital products, employing practices and standards that are most appropriate for their specific project. IMLS staff and peer reviewers will assess your plan, and it will be important in determining whether your project will be funded. Organize your plan to address the following:

- Type
- Availability
- Access
- Sustainability.

We participate in the Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI), a collaborative effort by federal agencies to define common standards, guidelines, methods, and best practices for creating digital collections. [Visit the FADGI website](#) for a growing list of links to relevant standards, recommendations, and other resources. While this list is not exhaustive—nor do we endorse any specific resource—applicants considering digital projects may find the information useful.

Use the guidance below to help you create and organize your Digital Products Plan.



Type

What digital products will you create?

Most projects are likely to generate digital content, resources, or assets. They may be digitized or born-digital products created by individuals, project teams, or through community gatherings. Examples include, but are not limited to, still images, audio files, moving images, microfilm, object inventories, object catalogs, artworks, books, posters, curricula, field books, maps, notebooks, scientific labels, metadata schema, charts, tables, drawings, workflows, teacher resources, and software, including source code, algorithms, applications, and digital tools, plus accompanying documentation.

In your Digital Products Plan,

- describe the digital content, resources, or assets you will create or collect,
- the quantities of each type,
- the digital file format(s),
- the accompanying metadata, and,
- any relevant standards you will use.
- If you are developing software, you should also specify the programming languages, platforms, frameworks, software, or other applications you will use to create your software and explain why you chose them.



Availability

How will you make your digital products openly available (as appropriate)?

We encourage grant recipients to make works produced with IMLS support widely available, and to share their work products (including publications, datasets, educational resources, software, and digital content) whenever possible through free and open-access journals and repositories. Your project may involve making digital products available through public or access-controlled websites, kiosks, or live or recorded programs.

We expect you to ensure that publications produced under an award (including but not limited to peer-reviewed manuscripts resulting from

research conducted under an award) are made available in a manner that permits the public to access, read, download, and analyze the work without charge.

In your Digital Products Plan,

- describe how you will make the digital content, resources, assets, software, and metadata available to the public;
- include details such as the delivery strategy (e.g., openly available online, available to specified audiences) and underlying hardware/software platforms and infrastructure (e.g., specific digital repository software or leased services, accessibility via standard web browsers, requirements for special software tools to use the content, delivery enabled by IIIF specifications); and
- identify and explain the reasons for any limitations in your Digital Products Plan.



Access

What rights will you assert over your digital products, and what limitations, if any, will you place on their use?

Will your products implicate privacy concerns or cultural sensitivities, and if so, how will you address them?

Award recipients may copyright any work that is subject to copyright and that was developed under an award or for which ownership was purchased. However, IMLS reserves, for Federal Government purposes, a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work and authorize others to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work.

We expect applicants receiving federal funds for developing or creating digital products to release these files under open-source licenses to maximize access and promote reuse. All work products resulting from IMLS funding should be distributed for free or at cost unless IMLS has provided written approval for another arrangement.

In your Digital Products Plan,

- identify any licenses under which digital products will be shared (e.g., Creative Commons licenses, RightsStatements.org statements);
- describe what intellectual property rights you will assert over your digital products and explain any limitations or conditions you will place on their use, and;
- if your products implicate privacy concerns or cultural sensitivities, describe these issues and how you plan to address them.



Sustainability

How will you address the sustainability of your digital products?

To the maximum extent possible, the digital products created with IMLS funding should be freely and readily available for use and reuse by libraries, archives, museums, and the public.

Some digital products that are generated during a project should be long-lived, requiring permanent preservation, and others (e.g., preliminary analyses, drafts of papers, plans for future work, peer-review assessments, most social media communications, and communications with colleagues) should be retained and shared in the medium- or short-term.

In your Digital Products Plan,

- describe your plan for preserving and maintaining digital products during and after the period of performance;
- identify the appropriate length of time different digital products should be curated;
- address storage systems, shared repositories, technical documentation, migration planning, and commitment of organizational funding for these purposes.

Note: You may charge the federal award before closeout for the costs of publication or sharing of results if the costs are not incurred during the period of performance of the federal award (see 2 C.F.R. § 200.461).

Public Access Plan for Research Projects

The sharing of research findings, data, and other deliverables is an essential component of research and expedites the translation of research results into new knowledge and practices.

If you are preparing a research proposal, you will need to provide a Public Access Plan to describe how you will follow the **IMLS Public Access Policy Guidance** for:

- public access to **peer-reviewed scholarly publications**, and
- public access to **permissible scientific research data** underlying peer-reviewed scholarly publications.

The Public Access Plan guides research applicants through planning how they will provide public access throughout the course of the proposed research project. If awarded, the General Terms and Conditions further outline the public access expectations for awardees. Applicants are expected to read the full **IMLS Public Access Policy Guidance** page to learn more about the legal requirements and find definitions specific to Public Access prior to creating your plan.

In one to two pages, address the following bullet points as related to your proposed project:

Peer-reviewed Scholarly Publications Access:

- Identify the type(s) and estimated amount of peer-reviewed scholarly publications you intend to publish.
- Describe your plan to submit a machine-readable copy of the most-appropriate version of a published manuscript to IMLS no later than the article's publication date. (See the IMLS Public Access Policy Guidance for definitions of key terms).

Permissible Scientific Research Data Management and Access:

- Identify the type(s) and estimated amount of data you plan to collect or generate.
- Will you collect any sensitive information? This may include personally identifiable information (PII), confidential information, or proprietary information (e.g., trade secrets). If so, detail the specific steps you will take to protect the information while you prepare it for public release (e.g., anonymizing individual identifiers, data aggregation).
- Awardees are expected to share as much data as possible. If some of the data will not be released publicly, explain why the data cannot be shared due to the protection of privacy, confidentiality, security, intellectual property, and other rights or requirements.

- What technical (hardware and/or software) requirements or dependencies would be necessary for understanding, retrieving, displaying, processing, or otherwise reusing the data? How can these tools be accessed by the public?
- What documentation (e.g., consent agreements, data documentation, codebooks, metadata, and analytical and procedural information) will you capture or create along with the data? Where will the documentation be stored and in what format(s)? How will you permanently associate and manage the documentation with the data it describes to enable future reuse?
- Identify the repository where you will deposit your data and describe any additional plans for managing, disseminating, and preserving data after the completion of the award-funded project.
- When and how frequently will you review this Public Access Plan to ensure compliance?