



Office of Library Services Accelerating
Promising Practices for Small Libraries
(APP)
FY 2020 Review Information

For additional information, contact:

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Proposal and Review Process Timeline

1. Applicants submit proposals to IMLS.
2. IMLS checks the proposals for eligibility and completeness.
3. IMLS identifies available reviewers with appropriate expertise and assigns reviewers to evaluate each proposal.
4. Reviewers receive access to the proposals, evaluate them, and complete their reviews and scores.
5. IMLS staff members may hold phone calls with reviewers to discuss scores and the merits of the proposals, as needed.
6. IMLS staff members review the financial information of each potential grant and grantee, including a detailed check of the proposed budget.
7. Based on reviewer comments and scores, IMLS staff members recommend proposals for funding to the IMLS Director, who has the authority to make final funding decisions.
8. IMLS makes awards. Whether or not they receive an award, all applicants receive anonymized copies of their peer review comments and scores. IMLS sends notification of the awards to each participating reviewer

Review Process

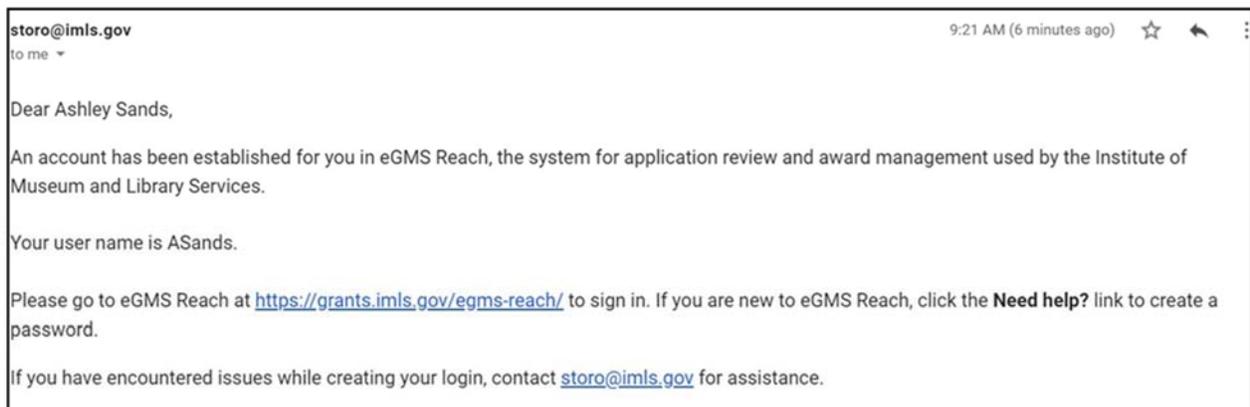
IMLS Completeness and Eligibility Review

IMLS staff review the eligibility and completeness of applications before distributing them for peer review. In some cases, applicants may be asked to submit missing or corrected information to IMLS, and that information will be incorporated into the applications provided to you.

Access to online portal

All review materials will be provided to you via the IMLS application review and grants management system maintained by IMLS. This system is called “eGMS Reach.” It is both the online portal that you will use to receive materials for review and the system where you will input your reviews.

In order to access the online portal for the first time, you will receive a separate email (see example below) from IMLS prompting you to create a username and password. If you do not receive the email, please check your junk folder. If you still do not see the message, contact imls-librarygrants@imls.gov. The email body will include instructions for how to set up your password on your first login.



Please alert IMLS staff immediately if you have not received your access credentials, if any materials are missing, you cannot open them, or if you encounter any other issues.

Upon receipt of the email, you should log into eGMS Reach, the system for application review and grants management used by IMLS. After you have completed the successful login, please ensure that you can access your reviewer materials. To do this, click on the “Go To Panel” button for your panel. Your panel will have a name that begins with “FY20_APP.”



The Panel section of eGMS Reach will provide you with the information you need to perform and submit your reviews. It begins with IMLS contact information for the panel, followed by your reviewer materials and then includes the applications you will be reviewing.

Your review process consists of three main activities:

- Preparing to begin peer review by reading available documentation
 - Quick Reference Guide
 - Reviewer Handbook (this document)
- Reading and reviewing the applications
- Completing and returning administrative documents
 - Conflict of Interest Form (you have already completed this form)

Using the online portal eGMS Reach, you will complete an evaluation form that includes written comments and asks you to assign one “Grade” or score for each application. More guidance on evaluating applications is provided in this document, but if any application seems to be missing pages or other information, please contact imls-librarygrants@imls.gov.

Please note that all reviews are due by **Friday, March 6, 2020**.

Confidentiality

The information contained in grant proposals is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions, project activities, or any other information contained in the proposals. Contact IMLS if you have any questions concerning a proposal. **Do not contact applicants directly.**

Glossary of terms

At times, the vocabulary used on the IMLS grants management portal, eGMS Reach, does not completely match the common IMLS vocabulary. We may use terms interchangeably throughout our instructions and in the online Reach interface. Here is a breakdown of common terms you will come across while completing your review:

Panel: The online space in which you will be completing the review process

Coordinator: IMLS Staff member available for technical questions you may have

Chair: IMLS staff member available for content-based questions you may have

Evaluation: Your reviewer comments and feedback that are provided to applicants

Applications: Proposals from applicants that you will be reviewing

Application Number: The unique identifier assigned to each proposal

Primary Person/Individual: Project Director (PD) or Principal Investigator (PI)

Primary Institution: The lead applicant and fiscal agent for a project

Grade: The single score or number you will provide for each proposal.

Time required

We estimate that it takes one to two hours to evaluate one proposal. First time reviewers may require additional time.

Reading proposals

Your thorough reading and understanding of each proposal will be key to providing insightful comments aligned with your overall score for the proposal. Before you review the proposals, please ensure you are familiar with the program Notice of Funding Opportunity (which can be found on our website and is linked below), and reference it as needed throughout the review process.

Writing comments

Write comments of 3-5 sentences minimum for each of the required prompts. Reviewer comments are used by IMLS staff to inform funding decisions and are provided to both successful and unsuccessful applicants to help improve their projects or future proposals.

When drafting your comments:

- Present comments in a constructive and professional manner to help the applicant improve their project or future proposal.
- Analyze the proposal in your comments; summarizing or paraphrasing the applicant's own words will not help the applicant.
- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Comments should be addressed to the applicants, not IMLS staff.

Characteristics of effective comments:	Characteristics of poor comments:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concise, easy to read and understand• Specific to the individual proposal• Reflect your experience and expertise• Are realistic about the capacity of the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make derogatory remarks• Question an applicant's honesty or integrity• Offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information• Offer limited explanation or detail• Reflect personal biases

Assigning scores

After you have read, evaluated, and written comments for each proposal, please provide a single numeric score from 1-7 (7 being the highest) that reflects your opinion of the proposal's overall quality and your recommendation of whether it should be funded. See the Guidance for Assigning Scores below for more information.

To help applicants understand and benefit from your reviews, make sure that your scores accurately reflect your written comments.

Reviewer Conference Calls

After reviews are received, IMLS staff may hold conference calls to discuss your comments and scores. In that event, you will be contacted to schedule a time for the call.

Managing records

Keep the proposals and a copy of your reviews in case there are questions from IMLS staff. We will remind you to destroy your review materials after awards are made.

Guidance for Assigning Scores

Fund	Exceptional	7	The applicant's response is exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses in its support of the proposed project.
	Excellent	6	The applicant's response is very strong with no more than one minor weakness in its support of the proposed project.
	Very Good	5	The applicant's response is strong with only a few minor weaknesses in its support for the proposed project.
	Good	4	The applicant's response is adequate but with numerous minor weaknesses in its support for the proposed project.
Do not fund	Some Merit	3	The applicant's response may have some strengths, but has at least one moderate weakness in its support for the proposed project.
	Poor	2	The applicant's response is deficient and has at least one major weakness in its support of the proposed project.
	Inadequate / Insufficient	1	The applicant's response is either inadequate or insufficient to evaluate fully and/or has numerous major weaknesses in its support of the proposed project.

<i>Minor</i>	<i>An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen the impact of the project.</i>
<i>Moderate</i>	<i>A weakness that lessens the impact of the project.</i>
<i>Major</i>	<i>A weakness that severely limits the impact of the project</i>

For all questions about reviewing, either technical or programmatic, contact IMLS staff.

Required administrative paperwork

Conflict of interest

Before beginning review, you will receive a Conflict of Interest Statement and Certification and a list of institutions whose proposals you may review. Identify any conflicts of interest you may have with those institutions, or sign and return the form if you have no conflicts. A conflict of interest would arise if you have a financial interest in whether or not the proposal is funded, or if for any reason you feel that you cannot review it objectively.

Once you begin reviewing your assigned proposals, you may identify other conflicts.

Contact us immediately if you identify any potential conflicts of interest.

Peer Services Agreement and Direct Deposit Forms

During your review period you will receive an email to access an IMLS Secure File Folder. This is a secure system administered by IMLS to safely obtain reviewer information. In the folder will be a Peer Review Services Agreement which is a required document and a Direct Deposit form if you are electing to receive an honorarium for your services. Instructions for using the system can be found under 'Files' in your Reach panel. Please complete these forms no later than the review due date.

Purpose and Scope of the APP Initiative

IMLS' Accelerating Promising Practices for Small Libraries (APP) is a special initiative of the National Leadership Grants for Libraries Program. The goals of this initiative are to support projects that strengthen the ability of small and/or rural libraries and archives to serve their communities and to build grantee capacity through participation in a community of practice (for additional details see the Mentor Organizations, Communities of Practice, and Program Evaluation section below). IMLS invites applications that focus on transforming K-12 school library practice, community memory, or digital inclusion and are clearly linked to an individual institution's broader community needs (for additional details regarding project categories, see Section A4 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity).

Please review the [FY20 APP Notice of Funding Opportunity](#).

IMLS agency-level goals

The mission of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. We provide leadership through research, policy development, and grant making.

U.S. museums and libraries are at the forefront in the movement to create a nation of learners. As stewards of cultural and natural heritage with rich, authentic content, libraries and museums provide learning experiences for everyone. In FY2018-2022, each award under this program will support one of the following three goals of the [IMLS strategic plan. Transforming Communities](#):

- **Lifelong Learning:** IMLS supports learning and literacy for people of all ages through museums and libraries.
- **Build Capacity:** IMLS strengthens the capacity of museums and libraries to improve the well-being of their communities.
- **Increase Public Access:** IMLS makes strategic investments that increase access to information, ideas, and networks through libraries and museums.

The goals focus on achieving positive public outcomes for communities and individuals; supporting the unique role of museums and libraries in preserving and providing access to collections and content; and promoting library, museum, and information service policies that ensure access to information for all Americans.

IMLS places importance on diversity and inclusion. This may be reflected in a project in a wide range of ways, including efforts to serve individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds; persons with disabilities; persons with limited functional literacy or information skills; individuals having difficulty using a library or museum; underserved urban and rural communities; and children from families with incomes below the poverty level. This

may also be reflected in efforts to recruit future professionals in the library or museum fields as well as strategies in building or enhancing access to collections and information.

Indicators of successful projects

Indicators (characteristics) of successful projects in the Accelerating Promising Practices for Small Libraries (APP) Initiative are as follows:

- **In-depth knowledge:** The project justification reflects a thorough understanding of the subject being addressed.
- **Project-based design:** The project work plan consists of a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing the key opportunity or challenge identified in the application.
- **Demonstrable outcomes:** The project generates measurable results that relate directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

Project categories

The project categories are:

- Transforming School Library Practice
- Community Memory
- Digital Inclusion

Transforming School Library Practice: IMLS recognizes the essential role of K-12 school library media centers (school libraries) in supporting cross-disciplinary and inquiry-based methods of learning and fostering the development of 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. We welcome applications that embrace meaningful shifts from transactional approaches toward ones in which school libraries serve as dynamic hubs for self-directed, inquiry-based learning and that position school library professionals as integral instructional partners to classroom teachers. Successful projects will provide high-quality, inclusive educational opportunities that equitably address particular needs of the communities served. Applicants should align their proposals with appropriate standards and best practices in K-12 school librarianship. All applicants are encouraged to build on or make.

Projects may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- Enhancing school library services and creating resources to foster early, digital, information, health, financial, media, civic, and other types of literacies;
- Developing, implementing, and evaluating programs and services that prepare students
- for success in college, career, and life;
- Purposefully integrating information technology and digital resources in ways that

support media creation rather than consumption, informed by pedagogical approaches such as experiential learning, project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, or guided discovery;

- Reconfiguring space in learner-centric ways to support the development of 21st century skills and literacies, informed by disciplines such as design thinking or user experience;
- Deepening meaningful instructional collaborations between school librarians and classroom teachers or school administrators;
- Partnering with community organizations that create opportunities for the student body and reinforce the school library as a dynamic hub for self-directed learning and career preparedness; and
- Providing extended library access beyond traditional school hours to support asynchronous, connected learning opportunities.

Community Memory: IMLS supports the role of libraries and archives as trusted stewards of our nation's knowledge and collections, as well as their ability to serve as trusted spaces for community engagement and dialogue. We are interested in projects that engage local communities in the collection, documentation, and preservation of their local histories, experiences, and identities. Applicants should follow appropriate standards and best practices for creating, describing, and preserving physical and digital collections. Projects should incorporate authentic and ethical practices and relationships with community members or organizations to ensure that the work undertaken aligns with community needs. All applicants are encouraged to build on or make use of previous IMLS-funded.

Projects may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- Planning and implementing events and programs to engage community members with collections documenting local histories and experiences;
- Employing methods such as web archiving or oral history to engage community members in the documentation and preservation of local histories;
- Using and archiving social and digital media to enrich community access to and interpretation of collections;
- Supporting events and programs to digitize or describe materials related to community histories, including photographs, artifacts, texts, and other materials (these projects must consider digitization as a component within a larger community-based project);
- Creating events and programs in support of community dialogues related to the collection and preservation of local histories;
- Developing crowdsourcing projects to engage community members in the description or contextualization of collections;
- Supporting community cohesion by documenting important local issues or events and engaging community members with related collections; and
- Engaging with specific communities in activities related to capturing and preserving their personal or family collections or histories and supporting development of sustainable and

accessible stewardship models.

Digital Inclusion: IMLS makes strategic investments to support libraries in promoting and facilitating digital inclusion. We welcome applications for projects that enhance the role of libraries in increasing access to information, ideas, and networks. We are interested in projects that support the role libraries play in promoting digital literacy, providing internet access, and enabling community engagement through civic data and civic technology. We encourage collaborations with partners, which may include local governments, data intermediaries, educational institutions, housing authorities, community technology training centers, network providers, non-profit organizations, and other social service and civic organizations. Applicants should follow appropriate standards and best practices for broadband adoption and digital literacy education. All applicants are encouraged to build on or make use of previous IMLS-funded work as it relates to their project and organizational context.

Projects may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- Providing innovative and creative services that augment and expand WiFi hotspot lending services in public and school libraries;
- Creating inclusive educational opportunities that address particular audience needs related to digital literacy. These opportunities may involve user privacy and security, personal computer use, and access and access to library collections and services;
- Supporting emergency preparedness and community resiliency through broadband access, wireless networks, and other communications infrastructures;
- Evaluating broadband and wireless capacity within libraries by exploring topics such as: bandwidth requirements, necessary data wiring and equipment, efficient network setups, and extent of WiFi coverage;
- Understanding and developing solutions with partners to address information literacy and barriers to broadband access;
- Engaging key collaborators for capacity-building and training for library staff and volunteers to actively support a range of users in building digital literacy skills; and Fostering participation in accessible telecommunications programs (e.g., E-rate) through partnerships between schools and libraries.

Special Budget Restrictions

Please note that given the initiative's focus on capacity-building, expenses for supplies, materials, and equipment may not exceed 30% of the total grant funds requested.

Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

As a reviewer for IMLS, you perform a vital role in ensuring the integrity of IMLS's peer review process and must carry out your duties in accordance with government ethics rules. Before you evaluate applications, we ask that you review the following ***General Principles of Ethical***

Conduct and Summary of the Conflict of Interest Laws. You will be asked to certify compliance with the IMLS Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement and Certification. IMLS allocates up to one hour of your reviewer time for you to consider these materials.

If, at any time in the course of performing your duties at IMLS, you believe you may have a conflict of interest, please contact the IMLS staff member coordinating your review process. Other questions about the ethics rules and responsibilities may be directed to IMLS's Designated Agency Ethics Official at ethics@imls.gov; (202) 653-4787; 955 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Suite 4000, Washington, DC 20024.

General Principles of Ethical Conduct

1. Public service is a public trust, requiring you to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
2. You shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
3. You shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. You shall not, except pursuant to such reasonable exceptions as are provided by regulation, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by IMLS, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the your duties.
5. You shall put forth honest effort in the performance of your duties.
6. You shall make no unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Government.
7. You shall not use public office for private gain.
8. You shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
9. You shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.
10. You shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.
11. You shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
12. You shall satisfy in good faith your obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those – such as Federal, State, or local taxes – that are imposed by law.
13. You shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.
14. You shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that you are violating the law or the ethical standards.

Summary of Conflict of Interest Laws

18 U.S.C. § 201 – Prohibits you from acceptance of bribes or gratuities to influence Government actions.

18 U.S.C. § 203 – Prohibits you from accepting compensation for representational activities involving certain matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct

and substantial interest.

18 U.S.C. § 205 – Prohibits you from certain involvement in claims against the United States or representing another before the Government in matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

18 U.S.C. § 207 – Imposes certain restrictions on you related to your activities after Government service.

18 U.S.C. § 208 – Prohibits you from participating in certain Government matters affecting your own financial interests or the interests of your spouse, minor child, general partner, or organization in which you are serving as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee.

18 U.S.C. § 209 – Prohibits you from being paid by someone other than the United States for doing their official Government duties.

Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a reviewer or panelist for IMLS, you may receive a grant application for review that could present a conflict of interest. Such a conflict could arise if you are involved with the applicant institution, or in the project described in the application, as a paid consultant or through other financial involvement. The same restrictions apply if your spouse or minor child is involved with the applicant institution or if the application is presented on behalf of an institution with which you, your spouse or minor child is negotiating for future employment.

A present financial interest is not the only basis for conflict of interest. Through prior association as an employee or officer, you may have gained knowledge of the applicant that would preclude objective review of its application. Past employment (generally more than five years) does not by itself disqualify a reviewer so long as the circumstances of your association permit you to perform an objective review of the application. If you believe you may have a conflict of interest with any application assigned to you for review, please notify us immediately.

You may still serve as a reviewer even if your institution is an applicant in this grant cycle or you were involved in an application submitted in this grant cycle, as long as you do not review any application submitted by your own institution or any application in which you were involved.

However, if you believe that these or any other existing circumstances may compromise your objectivity as a reviewer, please notify us immediately.

If an application presents no conflict of interest at the time you review it, a conflict of interest may still develop later on. Once you have reviewed an application, you should never represent the applicant in dealings with IMLS or another Federal agency concerning the application, or any grant that may result from it.

It is not appropriate, for your purposes or for the purposes of the institutions or organizations you represent, for you to make specific use of confidential information derived from individual applications that you read while you were serving as an IMLS reviewer. In addition, pending applications are confidential. Accordingly, you must obtain approval from IMLS before sharing any proposal information with anyone, whether for the

purpose of obtaining expert advice on technical aspects of an application or for any reason.

If you have any questions regarding conflict of interest, either in relation to a specific application or in general, please contact the IMLS staff member who is coordinating the review process.