



Laura Bush
21st Century Librarian Program

2011 Panelist Handbook

Technical Panel

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THE LAURA BUSH 21ST CENTURY LIBRARIAN GRANTS REVIEW PROCESS

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant panelist. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your expertise in one of the competitive categories of funding for libraries and archives.

The staff at IMLS has prepared this handbook to ensure fair and candid review of all eligible applications. It will provide you with the procedural information you need. Please use it in conjunction with this year's *Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant Application and Guidelines*. A series of eight *Reviewer 101* web presentations is available on the IMLS Web site under Reviewer Resources: <http://www.imls.gov/reviewers/resources.shtm>

THE LB21 PROGRAM

The Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant (LB21) program provides Federal grants through an annual, competitive process. In the LB21 program:

- Applications are evaluated by peers;
- Evaluations are based on the application's strength in proving that the applicant:
 - Meets applicable evaluation criteria as outlined in the *LB21 Guidelines*; and
 - Addresses one of the categories for this funding cycle as explained in the *Guidelines* (see pages 10-12).

THE LB21 PROCESS

1. Applicants review the *Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant Application and Guidelines* and submit proposals to IMLS.
2. IMLS receives the grant applications, checks them for eligibility and completeness.
3. IMLS chooses panelists and matches grant applications to those with appropriate expertise.
4. Technical panelists review the applications and write comments for online review system.
5. Panels meet to discuss proposals and make funding recommendations.
6. Overview panelists consider recommended proposals.
7. IMLS Director makes final funding decisions.
8. IMLS staff notifies successful applicants.
9. IMLS provides feedback to all applicants.

APPLICATION REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

I. FIRST STEPS

This handbook outlines an approach to help prepare for the panel review process. Contact IMLS at once and notify the appropriate staff contact if you have questions after reading the following information.

TIME REQUIRED

Experienced reviewers estimate that it takes two to three hours to evaluate one application. If you are a first time reviewer, you may need more time. We recommend the reviewing process outlined on the following pages.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Read through your list of applications to see if there are any potential conflicts of interest. If there is a potential conflict, contact IMLS immediately. Once you have reviewed an application, you should *never* represent the applicant in dealings with the IMLS or other Federal agencies in regard to this grant application or award.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information contained in grant applications is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions, project activities or any other information contained in the applications. Contact IMLS if you have any questions concerning an application—do not contact an applicant directly.

APPLICATION COMPLETENESS

Check your applications to make sure that all required information is included. *If any application appears to be incomplete, contact IMLS immediately.*

SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

The chart on the following page presents a week-by-week guide to completing the review process. You may want to use this chart as a model for your own schedule.

SUGGESTED FOUR-WEEK REVIEW SCHEDULE

WEEK 1	Check application materials for completeness and contact IMLS if problems	Check for conflicts of interest; contact IMLS immediately if any exist	Read <i>LB21 Application and Guidelines</i> and <i>Panelist Handbook</i>	Test online review system; log in; create new password; review instructions
WEEK 2	Evaluate applications: First read-through to understand range of responses	Write preliminary notes	Call IMLS with any questions on completeness, review process, etc.	
WEEK 3	Second careful and in-depth read-through	Write detailed comments for each evaluation criterion offline; cut and paste into online review system	Determine scores for all applications and make sure the scores reflect the comments	Provide thoughtful “Application Overview” comments for each application
WEEK 4	Continue Week 3 review activities	Verify that all comments and scores are in the online review system	Prepare brief outline to facilitate leading discussion of assigned proposals	Prepare all information to bring to Overview Panel meeting
SUBMIT ONLINE NO LATER THAN 3 BUSINESS DAYS BEFORE PANEL				

II. THE ONLINE REVIEW PROCESS

All reviewers must use the online review process. Use the following link to access the system:

<https://e-services.imls.gov/grantapps/reviewers.aspx>

Once you are confirmed as a reviewer, IMLS will send you an email with your password. Your login is the e-mail address that is on file with IMLS. When you login to set up your user account you will need to create a new password.

The instructions for creating and submitting your reviews will be at your fingertips. For all questions about reviewing, either technical or programmatic, please contact IMLS staff at (202) 653-4700.

Please **do not use the hotlink for technical assistance**, as this function has been disabled.

Once you have completed giving scores and providing comments for each application assigned to you, submit the entire review to IMLS.

Make sure to print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files.

Reminders

The online review process is a wonderful tool; however, there are a few points regarding the use of the online review process of which you should be aware:

- When accessing this system you can only use the e-mail address IMLS has on file for you.
- IMLS recommends writing comments in a word processor, then cutting and pasting them into the online review system.
- Once you submit your reviews, you cannot go back in and make revisions. To do so, you must contact IMLS and we will authorize your re-entry into the system so you can make changes. However, prior to submitting your reviews, you can repeatedly enter and exit the system without losing your information.
- The online review system works best with Internet Explorer.
- Complete your online reviews no later than 3 business days before the panel meeting.

III. EVALUATING APPLICATIONS

IMLS asks you to express your professional judgment of each proposal in the following ways: (1) Assess if the proposal addresses category priorities; and (2) Write comments.

Your judgment should reflect how well you think the information provided in each proposal addresses the goals and stated criteria of the specific LB21 category.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD PROPOSAL

A good LB21 proposal should:

- Demonstrate impact as defined in the *Guidelines*
- Successfully address each criterion
- Address goals for the appropriate category (Refer to pages 10-12 in the *Guidelines*.)

READ APPLICATIONS

Read your applications to develop a feel for the range of responses. Take notes as you read. Read each application again.

WRITE COMMENTS

Reread the evaluation criteria. Draft comments that reflect your judgment for each of the evaluation criteria. Write them in a word processor and then cut and paste into the online review system.

Submit final scores for assigned applications no later than 3 business days before the panel meeting. Please remember to print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files.

If you have other questions about reviewing, please contact Kevin Cherry at (202) 653-4662 or Mary Alice Ball at (202) 653-4730 or Karmen Bisher at (202) 653-4664.

GOOD COMMENTS

Some of the characteristics of good comments are:

- Presented in a constructive manner
- Concise, specific, easy to read and understand
- Specific to the individual applicant
- Reflect the professionalism of the reviewer
- Correlate with the rating that is given
- Acknowledge the resources of the institution
- Reflect the application's strengths and identifies areas for improvement

Remember. Successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to improve their awards or future applications!

**POOR
COMMENTS**

Comments that are considered poor are vague, irrelevant, insensitive, or unclear. These comments actually hinder the evaluation process rather than help it.

To avoid making poor comments, DO NOT:

- Penalize an applicant because you feel the institution doesn't need the money—remember, any eligible institution may apply for and receive LB21 funds, regardless of need.
- Penalize an applicant because of missing materials, unless you have determined that the materials are missing from the original application. If you are missing *required* materials, contact IMLS immediately.
- Make derogatory remarks—offer suggestions for improvement rather than harsh criticism.
- Question an applicant's honesty or integrity. You may question the accuracy of information provided by the applicant; if you are unsure how to phrase your concerns, contact IMLS.
- Offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information—your comments should concern only the information IMLS requests of applicants.

**IV. PREPARING
FOR PANEL
DISCUSSIONS**

- You are expected to write comments for each application assigned to you.
- These comments are sent to both successful and unsuccessful applicants and are used to improve awarded projects or future applications.
- In the proposals assigned to you, you are expected to both lead discussions for and give input to discussions for those proposals.
- The discussions are important to the review process and culminate in funding recommendations from the panel.
- After you have completed comments for each project, review them and prepare a very brief description of what the project proposes to do, give your preliminary evaluation, and support your recommendation through a brief description of the proposal's strengths and weaknesses.
- As the assigned Discussion Leader, you will be responsible for presenting a brief synopsis, presenting your preliminary score and taking notes on other's comments.