Native American Library Services Enhancement Grant Program

FY 2016 Reviewer Handbook

Contents

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Native American Library Services Enhancement grant program reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's proposals because of your expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- knowledge of and familiarity with Native American communities and their library services/information needs;
- education and training in library and information science;
- technical knowledge regarding computers, electronic information management, software, social media, or digitization.

The staff at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has prepared this handbook to ensure fair and candid review of all eligible proposals. It provides you with the procedural information you need. Please use it in conjunction with this year's *Native American Library Services Enhancement Grants Notice of Funding Opportunity* available on our website at:

https://www.imls.gov/nofo/native-american-library-services-enhancement-grants-fy16-notice-funding-opportunity

Even if you have reviewed for other IMLS programs in the past, you should read through this booklet, since we make changes each year that may impact your reviews.

We greatly appreciate the tremendous amount of time and effort you commit to being a reviewer. By participating in the peer review process, you make a significant contribution to the grant program and provide an invaluable service to the entire museum, archives, and library communities.

Thank you!

Purpose and Scope of Native American Library Services Enhancement Grant Program

Enhancement Grants are competitive grants available to support activities that advance the operations of eligible Native American libraries to new levels of service. Enhancement Grant projects may enhance existing library services or implement new library services, particularly as they relate to the following goals in the updated IMLS statute (20 U.S.C. §9141):

- Expanding services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats, in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support such individuals' needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, and digital literacy skills
- Establishing or enhancing electronic and other linkages and improved coordination among and between libraries and entities, as described in 20 U.S.C. §9134(b)(6), for the purpose of improving the quality of and access to library and information services

- Providing training and professional development, including continuing education, to enhance the skills of the current library workforce and leadership, and advance the delivery of library and information services, and
- Enhancing efforts to recruit future professionals to the field of library and information services
- Developing public and private partnerships with other agencies and community-based organizations
- Targeting library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills
- Targeting library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty line (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with section 9902(2) of title 42) applicable to a family of the size involved
- Developing library services that provide all users access to information through local, state, regional, national, and international collaborations and networks
- Carrying out other activities consistent with the purposes of the Library Services and Technology subchapter of the IMLS statute (20 U.S.C. §9121).

Enhancement Grant awards are between $10,000 and $150,000, subject to the availability of funds and at IMLS discretion.

Proposal and Review Process

1. Applicants submit their proposals using Grants.gov.
2. IMLS receives the proposals and checks them for organizational eligibility and completeness.
3. IMLS identifies a pool of available reviewers with appropriate expertise and assigns reviewers to evaluate each proposal.
4. Reviewers receive access to the full proposals, evaluate them, and complete their reviews and scores through the online reviewer system.
5. Review panels convene in Washington, DC, for reviewers to discuss scores and merits of the proposals.
6. IMLS staff members review the financial/accounting information and the budget sheets of each potential grantee.
7. IMLS staff members provide a list of proposals recommended for funding to the IMLS Director for approval. By law, the Director has the authority to make final funding decisions.
8. IMLS awards Enhancement grants in September. IMLS notifies all applicants whether or not they have received an award. With their notification, all applicants receive anonymous copies of the panel reviews. IMLS also sends notification of the awards to each participating reviewer.

What to Expect at the Panel

When the panel meets at IMLS in Washington, DC, we will discuss each proposal. While our time is limited, we should have ample opportunities to go over every proposal in sufficient detail. IMLS will provide laptops with access to the complete proposals as well as the reviews you submitted; you need not print out copies of proposals, but it may be convenient to bring along copies of your reviews and any notes you may have.

We do not need to reach consensus on any evaluation, but you will have the opportunity to adjust your scores and add or revise your comments after each proposal is discussed.

During the meeting, we will set aside time to hear your ideas and feedback about the grant review process and the Native American Library Services Enhancement grant program.

How Your Reviews Are Used

Your scores inform the ranking of proposals and are the basis for decisions about which proposals receive funding. Your work helps the Director and IMLS staff understand the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. Your comments also help unsuccessful applicants revise their proposals for future grant cycles.

General Review Information

Verify access to proposals online

You will use two online systems:

- Dropbox: An online file sharing system used to download proposals and supporting materials. You do not need a Dropbox account to access proposals.
- IMLS Online Reviewer System: A system to enter your evaluative comments and scores for each proposal. See Appendix II and Appendix III for additional information about this system.

You will be emailed links to both systems. Please alert IMLS staff immediately if any proposals are missing or you cannot open them.

Time required

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

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 an applicant directly.

Conflict of interest

Once you begin reviewing your assigned proposals, if you discover any previously unidentified potential conflict, contact us immediately. Please see the Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement included as Appendix I of this handbook. A conflict of interest would arise if you have a financial interest in whether or not the proposal is funded, or if for some reason, you feel that you cannot review it objectively.

Required paperwork

You will receive via email a Peer Reviewer Services Agreement, a Direct Deposit Form, and a Conflict of Interest Statement and Certification. Please complete these forms and return them to your IMLS contact by the review deadline (Sunday June 5, 2016).

Managing records

Keep your proposals and a copy of your review sheets until December 1, 2016, in case there are questions from IMLS staff. Please maintain confidentiality of all proposals that you review. After December 1, 2016, you may destroy the proposals and related materials.

IMLS may instruct you to destroy your records at an earlier date, after the review and award process has concluded.

Review Process

Reading proposals

Your thorough reading and understanding of each proposal will be the key to providing both insightful comments and an overall rating for the proposal, ensuring that your comments are a reflection of your overall score. Before you review proposals, please read the *Native American Library Services Enhancement Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity* at https://www.imls.gov/nofo/native-american-library-services-enhancement-grants-fy16-notice-funding-opportunity.

Review criteria

The IMLS Online Reviewer System will require you to provide summary evaluative comments for each of the review criteria. You will be asked to address four areas in the Reviewer System. Below are the areas applicants must address, as well as some example criteria you should consider for each area:

1.
2. **Introduction and Assessment of Need**
   - Does the applicant describe their community, including population profile, location, economy, educational levels, languages, culture, and other characteristics that you consider important?
   - Does the proposal describe the current role of the library in the community and the services it provides (e.g., mission, goals, hours and days of operation, staffing, size and content of collection, number of registered patrons, circulation statistics, computer technology, Internet connectivity and access, public programs offered, etc.)?
   - Does the proposal describe the purpose of the proposed Enhancement Grant project as it relates to a specific need that you have identified. What specific audience(s) will the library serve with this project? (e.g., particular age groups, underserved community members, other types of target audience)?
   - What type of assessment was conducted to identify this need as a priority for the library? Describe the results of the assessment, including baseline data that can be used to compare with final results to determine the project's success. Why do you consider your approach to be the best solution to meet the needs of the targeted audience?

   Review Criteria:
   - Does the applicant demonstrate that it has identified an audience, through a formal or informal assessment of the audience's needs, that it is aware of similar projects completed by other institutions, and that it has developed a project and goals that are that best answer those needs?
   - Does the proposal provide evidence of innovation, shown by the degree to which the project results in more than incremental change?

3. **Expected Outcomes and Project Goals**
a. Does the proposal describe the intended performance goals and benefits of this project for the library or archive fields, as follows:
   - Does it describe the goals that will be established to guide the project to completion? (Goals are statements of broad results that guide the organization's design of programs, choice of projects, and management decisions.)
   - Does it describe what results should be seen at the end of the project period? In other words, what new knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors is expected to seen in the audience? How will it specifically benefit the individuals or groups that served?

Review Criteria:
   - To what degree to which potential benefits of the project outweigh its potential risks?
   - To what degree to which evaluation plan ties directly to project goals through measurable project outcomes, findings, or products?
   - Is there evidence that the project evaluation will provide reliable information on which to judge impact or base actions?
   - For projects that involve building digital collections, software, or other technology products, in addition to the above criteria, is there evidence that the project demonstrates interoperability and accessibility in its broadest context and potential for integration into larger-scale initiatives?

b. Does the proposal describe the intended performance goals and benefits of this project:
   - Are there specific learning outcomes? Is the project designed to improve or enhance?
   - What performance indicators will be measured for the learning outcomes identified in the prior question?
   - Are there project targets for these performance measures? How will success be measured toward these targets?
   - What tangible products will result from this project?

Review Criteria:
   - To what degree to which the project is likely to have a far-reaching impact?
   - Is there evidence that the project will create, implement, and document workable models that have the potential for successful, widespread adaptation where appropriate?
   - To what degree will potential benefits of the project outweigh its potential risks?
   - To what degree do evaluation plan tie directly to project goals through measurable project outcomes, findings, or products?
   - Is there evidence that the project evaluation will provide reliable information on which to judge impact or base actions?

4. **Project Design and Required Resources**

   Review the proposed project's work plan. Does it include information such as the following:
   - Does the project have clearly stated project goals and objectives?
   - Are all activities required to implement the project included in the proposal?
   - Does the proposal include information about the roles and commitments of partnering organizations, if applicable?
   - Has any preliminary work or planning been completed? (If the project or one closely related to it has been supported by IMLS or other funding agencies, does the proposal indicate what has been accomplished and the degree to which that project has met its established goals. The proposal should list any print or electronic publications produced so far, with web addresses, statistics on use, and other relevant information.)
   - Does the proposal include a rationale for using any procedures that deviate from accepted practice and explanation of whether the results would be compatible with other resources that follow existing standards?
   - How the project will test the potential applicability of any innovative techniques and procedures that the project is likely to develop?

   Review Criteria:
   - Is there evidence that the project proposes efficient, effective, and reasonable approaches to accomplish its goals and objectives?
   - Is there evidence that methodology and design are appropriate to the scope of the project?
   - Is there evidence that the project uses existing or emerging standards or best practices?
   - If products such as digital collections or software tools will be generated by the project, is there evidence that applicant has considered key technical details and has included the Digital Stewardship Supplementary Information Form?

5. **Evaluation Methods and Dissemination**
a. Review the project's communication plan. It should include information such as the following:
   - Does it describe the audiences the project plans to reach and how it will reach them?
   - Are there plans for community building and/or audience engagement via discussion, involvement, collaboration, or adoption?
   - Are there means to measure audience engagement and outcomes?
   - Are there staff assignments for outreach, promotion, and dissemination?
   - Are there plans for technical documentation, where applicable?

   Review Criteria:
   - Is there evidence that the results, products, models, findings, processes, and benefits of this project will be communicated freely and effectively?

- Is there evidence that communication activities will be ongoing throughout the project lifecycle rather than occur simply at the end of the project?
- Is there evidence that the project will seek feedback from various stakeholders?
- Is there evidence that the communities described in the Needs Assessment section can be reached and served through the proposed communications plan?
- Is there evidence that the project will make every reasonable attempt to communicate lessons learned and the results of the project beyond standard professional audiences and communities of interest?

b. Does the the applicant describe how it will continue to support the project, its results, and/or new models that are created beyond the grant period?

Review criteria:
- To what extent will the project's benefits continue beyond the grant period, either through ongoing institutional support of project activities or products, websites development of institutional expertise and capacity, working with members of the broader community to continue support for project activities or products, and/or through broad long-term access to project products?
- To what extent has the applicant planned to build buy-in or adoption among others in the field?
- To what extent will the project lead to systemic change within the organization as well as within the archive and/or library fields?
- Are there plans for preserving and sustaining any digitized collections, software and supporting documentation, information systems, and other technology tools?

Review criteria for each section are outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity: https://www.imls.gov/nofo/native-american-library-services-enhancement-grants-fy16-notice-funding-opportunity

The Online Reviewer System will not allow you to submit blank comment fields. If a review section is not applicable to the proposal being reviewed, please note "This section is not relevant to this proposal", or similar, in the system.

Writing comments
Draft comments for each of the required comment areas. **We strongly recommend that you draft your comments using word processing software, and paste the comments into the Online Reviewer System form**.
- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Judge the proposal on its own merits. Do not base your evaluation on any prior knowledge of an institution.
- If you question the accuracy of any information, call IMLS to discuss it. Do not question the applicant's honesty or integrity in your written comments.
- Do not contact the applicant directly.
- Consider whether the applicant has the resources to successfully complete the project.

- Analyze the narrative section of the proposal in your comments. Summarizing or paraphrasing the applicant's own words will not help the applicant.

Characteristics of constructive and effective comments:
- 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 proposal's strengths and identify areas for improvement

Characteristics of poor comments:
- Make derogatory remarks. (Offer suggestions for improvement rather than harsh criticism.)
- Penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money. (An eligible institution may receive funds, regardless of institutional need.)
- Penalize an applicant because of missing materials. (If you believe a proposal is missing required materials, please contact an IMLS staff member immediately.)
- Question an applicant's honesty or integrity. (You may question the accuracy of information provided by the applicant, but if you are unsure how to frame your question, contact IMLS.)
- Offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information. (Your comments should concern only the information IMLS requests of applicants.)
- Offer limited explanation or detail for the score provided.

Remember that successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to help improve their projects or future proposals.

Assigning scores

After you have read, evaluated and provided written comments, please provide a single numeric score for the proposal that reflects your opinion of the proposal's overall quality and your recommendation of whether it should be funded this year. A score of 3 or above is typically considered "fundable".

SCORE DEFINITIONS
5 – Excellent: The applicant's response is outstanding and provides exceptional support for the proposed project.
4 – Very Good: The applicant's response provides solid support for the proposed project.
3 – Good: The applicant's response is adequate but could be strengthened in its support for the proposed project.
2 – Some Merit: The applicant's response is flawed and does not adequately support the proposed project.
1 – Inadequate/Insufficient: The applicant's response is inadequate or provides insufficient information to allow for a confident evaluation.

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

Ranking proposals

Rank the proposals in order from most to least competitive. This information cannot be entered into the Online Reviewer System. Please send this list to your assigned Program Officer via email when you submit your comments and scores.

Submitting reviews

All reviewers will use the IMLS Online Reviewer System to submit comments and scores for each proposal. *IMPORTANT:* Instructions and tips for using the Online Reviewer System are in Appendix II and Appendix III of this handbook.

For all questions about reviewing, either technical or programmatic, please contact an IMLS program staff member directly. Please do not use the link on the Online Reviewer System page.

Review your draft comments and preliminary scores. A review with even one missing comment or score cannot be accepted by the Online Reviewer System. Adjust your scores, if necessary, to more accurately reflect your written evaluation. **Scores should support comments, and comments should justify scores.**

Once you have completed assigning scores and providing comments for each proposal assigned to you, we recommend that you keep a digital copy of your completed reviews until told to destroy it by IMLS. Then click on the submit box to send the entire review to IMLS. Following your submission, email your IMLS Program Officer to indicate your ranking of the proposals.

Once you submit your reviews, you cannot go back in to make revisions. If you feel you need to make a change, you must contact an IMLS staff member, and we will authorize your re-entry into the system. However, prior to submitting your reviews, you may repeatedly enter and exit the system without losing your information.

The deadline to submit reviews via the Online Reviewer System is Sunday June 5, 2016.

Appendix I: Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), you may receive for review a grant proposal 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 proposal, 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 proposal 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 proposal. 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 proposal. If you believe you may have a conflict of interest with any proposal 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 a proposal submitted in this grant cycle, as long as you do not review any proposal submitted by your own institution or any proposal 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 a proposal presents no conflict of interest at the time you review it, a conflict of interest may still develop later on. Once you have reviewed a proposal, you should never represent the applicant in dealings with IMLS or another Federal agency concerning the proposal, 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 proposals that you read while you were serving as an IMLS reviewer. In addition, pending proposals 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 a proposal or for any reason.

If you have any questions regarding conflict of interest, either in relation to a specific proposal or in general, please contact IMLS immediately.

Appendix II: How to Use the Online Reviewer System

All reviewers will use the IMLS Online Reviewer System to create and submit reviews. Below are the general steps for using the system. We recommend that you review these steps before you get started.

Logging In

You will receive login information and a link to the Online Reviewer System from IMLS. Please contact IMLS staff if you need to have your password reset.

Accessing the Online Reviewer System

- Once you have logged into the system, an **E-Review Security Screen** will appear. Read this page and click **OK**.
- After you have created a new password, your review assignment will appear. To access the list of proposals, click **VIEW**.
- Before you can begin to review any of the proposals, you must complete a Conflict of Interest Statement. If you have no conflicts of interest with any of the applicants on the list, click **SUBMIT CONFLICT OF INTERESTS STATEMENT** (bottom of page) and proceed. If you think that you may have a conflict of interest with an applicant, **do not** check the conflict box. Instead, contact an IMLS staff member.
- Now you are ready to begin. Simply click **REVIEW** beside any of the proposals.

Entering Comments and Scores

We encourage you to record your comments in a Word document, and then cut and paste your text into the IMLS Online Reviewer System.

- **Comments** and **Scores**: You must submit comments for each **Review Criterion** for each proposal. Be sure to save each set of comments by clicking **SAVE** before you move onto to the next criterion. You will only need to provide one overall numeric score for each proposal you are assigning to review. Click proposal **Overview** to submit an overall score.
- Note: **Funding Priorities** does not apply. Please ignore this.
- Once you have completed a proposal review, click the **SAVE & CLOSE** box at the bottom of the screen. This will return you to the proposal**s List** and allow you to choose another proposal to review.

Revisiting the Online Reviewer System

- With your e-mail address and your new password, you will be able to re-enter the Online Reviewer System and complete or edit your reviews as often as you wish.
- Once you have logged in, the Security screen will appear again. Click **OK**.
- Once your review assignment appears, click **VIEW** in order to access the proposal**s List** and proceed with the review process.

Completing Your Online Reviews

- Once you have reviewed all proposals assigned to you, the proposal Review Status

column should read **COMPLETE** beside each proposal.
- Please **PRINT** each review for your records.
- Once you have completed all your reviews, click **I AM READY TO SUBMIT THIS REVIEW TO IMLS** at the bottom of the screen.

Online Reviewer System FAQs

This system was created several years ago with a Microsoft-based platform. While state-of-the-art at the time of development, it has not been updated. The system still works, but it can be frustrating at first. Once you have a few reviews underway it should prove an efficient process for managing and submitting your reviews. Below are some common user questions.

Do any of the buttons for assistance work? What if I forget my password?
No. Please contact IMLS staff for help if you need your password reset or have any other problems.

What is the best way to get started or comfortable with the system?
Shortly after receiving your packet, try logging into the system and entering some practice remarks to get a feel for the set up and information display. Then, as your deadline approaches, you can focus on the substance of your reviews rather than the process of entering information. Test out the system early and try to do it between 9:00am and 5:00pm so we are available to assist you.

PLEASE NOTE: The system will not be available Wednesday evenings, from approximately 6pm to 10pm for maintenance.

Appendix III: Online Reviewer System Troubleshooting

Many reviewers encounter an issue where the text displayed in the Online Reviewer System is superimposed on top of buttons or menus, making the buttons difficult or impossible to click. It may look like this:
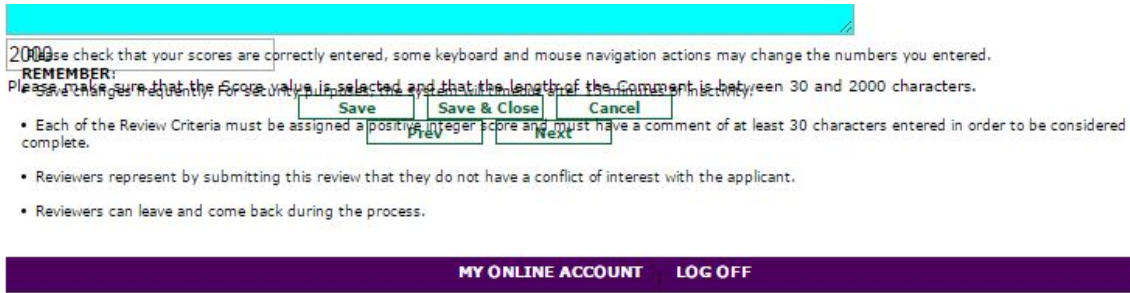

To resolve this issue, you must access the system **using Internet Explorer with Compatibility View (or Compatibility Mode) enabled**. In IE 11, this can be accomplished with the following steps:

1. Locate the Settings menu in the top right corner of the browser window and select *Compatibility View settings*.
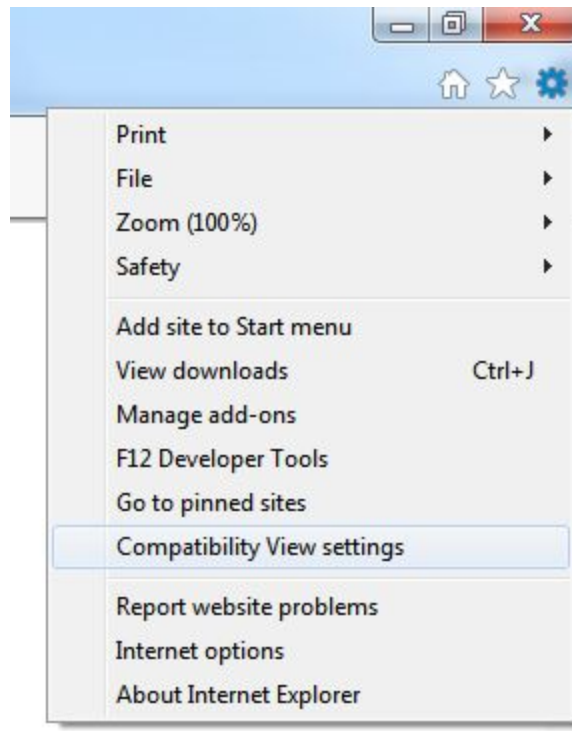
2. Type "imls.gov" in the *Add this website:* dialogue box, then click *Add*.
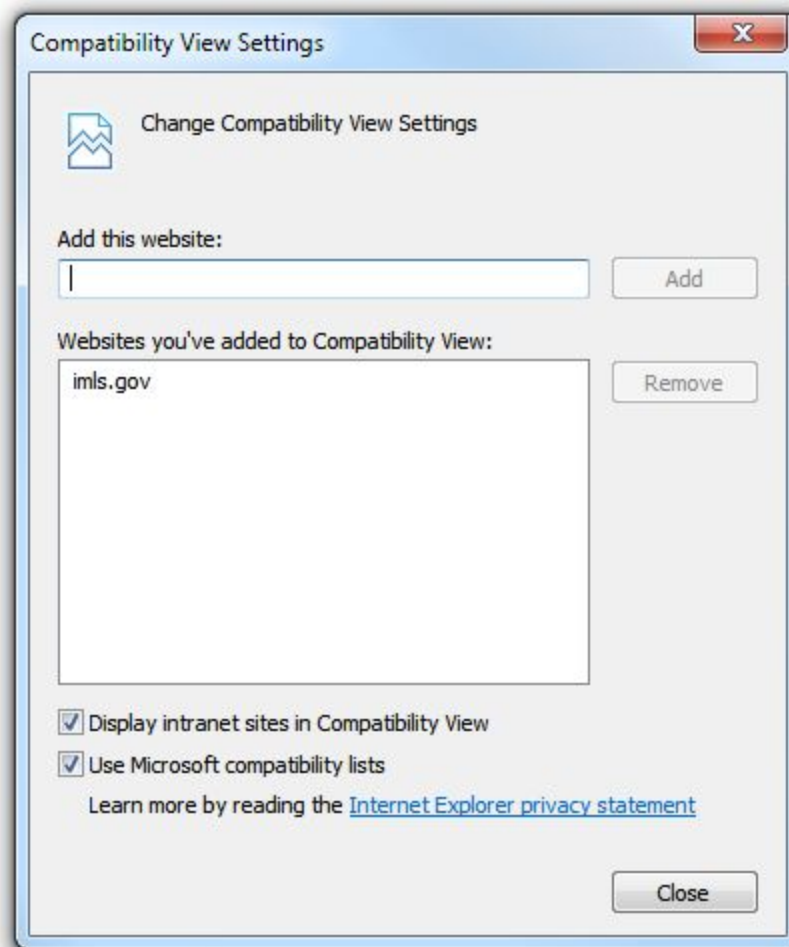
If you are using another version of IE, please refer to help documentation for your version, or contact IMLS for assistance.