



# National Leadership Grants for Libraries FY2016 Field Reviewer Handbook

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## Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a National Leadership Grants for Libraries (NLG) field reviewer. 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 the Institute of Museum and Library Services (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 *National Leadership Grants for Libraries Notice of Funding Opportunity* available on our website at:

<https://www.ims.gov/nofo/national-leadership-grants-libraries-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 NLG program and provide an invaluable service to the entire museum, archives and library communities.**

**Thank you!**

## Purpose and Scope of the National Leadership Grants Program

National Leadership Grants for Libraries (NLG) support projects that address challenges faced by the library and archive fields and that have the potential to advance practice in those fields. Successful proposals will generate results such as new tools, research findings, models, services, practices, or alliances that can be widely used, adapted, scaled, or replicated to extend the benefits of federal investment.

We now hold two National Leadership Grants for Libraries funding opportunities annually, with two separate deadlines. An additional NLG funding opportunity was announced in December 2015 with an application submission due date of February 2016.

We are especially interested in supporting proposals to address one of two agency priorities:

- National digital platform
- Learning in libraries

We will also accept any applications that explore the following issues:

- What will move library and archival services in the United States forward?
- What will help libraries and archives make decisions about their own investments?
- What knowledge, capacity, functions, or infrastructure can libraries and archives share?

We conducted a series of IMLS Focus convenings in 2015 that identified issues in the [National Digital Platform](#) and [Learning in Libraries](#) areas, among other topics. The reports, synthesizing key takeaways from this year's Focus convenings, may have been used by applicants during the proposal development process.

#### National Digital Platform priority

We are interested in work that will support the national digital platform: the combination of software applications, social and technical infrastructure, and staff expertise used by libraries, museums, and archives to provide online content and services to all users in the United States. Libraries have made important advancements in this area over the past 20 years, but much of that work was experimental or isolated. We want to bridge gaps between disparate pieces of the existing digital library infrastructure, for increased efficiencies, cost-savings, access and services. The program cannot support the digitization of content, or pre-digitization activities like inventorying collections. Please note: proposals that focus on training and development of librarians should be submitted to the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grants program.

Issues to consider may include:

- increasing access to shared digital services for libraries and archives through existing platforms
- expanding the range, types and diversity of existing digital content available through shared infrastructure
- improving the discoverability and functionality of digital content;
- improving the interoperability, usability and community involvement of widely used open source digital library software applications;
- tackling problems facing libraries in providing digital access to users today at scale (digital stewardship, data curation, applications of linked data, and crowdsourcing); and
- addressing access to in-copyright and licensed content, including investigation of economic models.

### Learning in Libraries priority

We are interested in work that builds institutional capacity, develops STEM learning, engages community and encourages partnerships to support all types of learning and inquiry, including participatory, inquiry-based, and/or other forms of learning, in libraries. Competitive proposals in this category should focus on supporting and enhancing libraries' ability to make their own decisions and investments, rather than the development of learning spaces or programs in individual libraries and communities. Please note: proposals that focus on training and development of librarians should be submitted to the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grants program.

Issues to consider may include:

- creating partnerships and communities of practice for practitioners across fields;
- supporting a cultural shift away from passive service models to proactive, anticipatory and engaged user service models;
- building STEM learning opportunities for at-risk youth;
- designing, developing, testing, and sharing informal learning curricula;
- building bridges to national learning standards or formal curricula;
- developing replicable models for community engagement, mentorship and partnerships;
- defining strategies to increase libraries' relationships and collaborations with education partners in other formal and/or informal settings;
- increasing national awareness of library services and resources in STEM and informal learning collaborations;
- using libraries to increase STEM, digital, financial, health and other literacies; and improving methodologies for measuring the impact of these service models

### Funding categories

The award amount limitations are as follows:

- Project Grants: \$10,000 - \$2,000,000
- Research Grants: \$10,000 - \$2,000,000
- Planning Grants: \$10,000 - \$50,000
- National Forum Grants: up to \$100,000

*Project Grants* support fully developed projects for which needs assessments, partnership development, feasibility analyses, prototyping, and other planning activities have been completed.

*Research Grants* support the investigation of key questions important to library or archival practice. The term "research" includes systematic study directed toward fuller scientific

knowledge or understanding of the subject studied. It also includes activities involving the training of individuals in research techniques where such activities utilize the same facilities as other research and development activities and where such activities are not included in the instruction function.

*Planning Grants* allow project teams to perform preliminary planning activities, such as analyzing needs and feasibility, solidifying partnerships, developing project work plans, or developing prototypes or proofs of concept. These activities should have the potential to lead to a full project, such as those described in Project Grants above.

*National Forum Grants* provide the opportunity to convene qualified groups of experts and key stakeholders to consider issues or challenges that are important to libraries or archives across the nation. Grant-supported meetings are expected to produce reports for wide dissemination with expert recommendations for action or research that address a key challenge identified in the proposal. The expert recommendations resulting from these meetings are intended to guide future applications to the NLG-Libraries program. National Forum Grant recipients are required at the end of the project to submit to us a brief whitepaper for public distribution summarizing those expert recommendations, which we will post online.

## Application and Review Process

1. Applicants submit their preliminary proposals using Grants.gov.
2. IMLS receives the applications and checks them for organizational eligibility and application completeness.
3. IMLS identifies a pool of available Tier 1 reviewers with appropriate expertise and assigns reviewers to evaluate each application. Tier 1 reviewers receive access to the preliminary proposals, evaluate them, and complete their reviews.
4. Tier 1 review panels meet in Washington, DC, to rank the proposals, discuss the merits of the proposals, and to provide recommendations and feedback for improvement of the preliminary proposals. IMLS uses Tier 1 reviewers' comments and feedback to provide a list of proposals recommended for Tier 2 review to the Director. The Deputy Director makes final decisions on which institutions will be invited to submit full proposals.
5. Invited institutions are provided reviewer comments and invited to speak with IMLS staff regarding their proposal. They are invited to make any changes to their proposals and submit full applications by the deadline of January 15, 2016.
6. Applicants submit their full proposals using Grants.gov.

7. IMLS receives the full proposals and checks them again for organizational eligibility and application completeness.
8. IMLS identifies a pool of available Tier 2 reviewers with appropriate expertise and assigns reviewers to evaluate each application. Tier 2 reviewers receive access to the full applications, evaluate them, and complete their reviews and scores through the online reviewer system.
9. IMLS staff may hold phone calls to discuss scores and rankings with reviewers.
10. IMLS staff members review the financial/accounting information and the budget sheets of each potential grantee.
11. IMLS staff members provide a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director for approval. By law, the Director has the authority to make final funding decisions.

## General Review Information

### Verify access to applications online

You will use two online systems:

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

You will be sent a list of assigned proposals via email with the relevant links. Please alert IMLS staff immediately if any applications are missing or you cannot open them.

### 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.

### 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.

### Conflict of interest

Once you begin reviewing your assigned applications, 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 (February 15, 2016).**

### Managing records

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

## Review Process

### Reading applications

Your thorough reading and understanding of each application will be the key to providing both insightful comments and an overall rating for the application, ensuring that your comments are a reflection of your overall score. Before you review proposals, please read the NLG Notice of Funding Opportunity at <https://www.imls.gov/nofo/national-leadership-grants-libraries-fy16-notice-funding-opportunity>. If your assigned proposals reference the [National Digital Platform](#) and [Learning in Libraries](#) convening report, you may want to reference that as well.

### 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 the following areas in the Reviewer System:

1. Statement of Need
2. Impact Statement
3. Project Design
4. Diversity Plan (if applicable) – *please include in Project Design comments*
5. Project Resources

6. Communications Plan (not required for Planning Grants)
7. Sustainability (not required for Planning Grants, National Forum Grants, or Research Grants)
8. Application Overview

Review criteria for each section are outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. **Please see Appendix II for a complete list of these criteria.**

The Online Reviewer System will not allow you to submit blank comment fields. If a review section is not applicable to the application being reviewed, please note “This section is not relevant to this application”, 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 a word processing software, and paste them into the Online Reviewer System form.**

- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Judge the application 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 application 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 application’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. (Any eligible institution may receive funds, regardless of institutional need.)

- Penalize an applicant because of missing materials. (If you believe an application 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 applications.**

### Assigning scores

After you have read, evaluated and provided written comments, please provide a single numeric score for the application 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 Tier 2 reviewers will use the IMLS Online Reviewer System to submit comments and scores for each application. *IMPORTANT:* Instructions and tips for using the Online Reviewer System are in **Appendix III and Appendix IV** 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 application 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 Monday, February 15.**

## 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 application 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 IMLS immediately.

## Appendix II: Review Criteria Quick Reference

This appendix lists the criteria that should be considered in each section of your comments.

### 1. Statement of Need

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- The applicant should 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 best answer those needs.
- The proposal should provide evidence of broad national significance.
- Research proposals should frame the project in the context of current research and explain what the project will contribute to the library or archive fields.

Planning grant proposals do not require full needs assessments and environmental scans since these types of activities can be part of planning activities, but they should describe the field-wide need or challenge the planning grant is addressing.

### 2. Impact

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- Degree to which the project is likely to have a far-reaching national impact through results or products that serve multiple institutions and constituencies
- Evidence that the project will create, implement, and document work that has the potential for successful, widespread adaptation where appropriate
- Degree to which potential benefits of the project outweigh its potential risks
- Degree to which evaluation plan ties directly to project goals through measurable project outcomes, findings, or products
- 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, evidence that the project demonstrates interoperability and accessibility in its broadest context and potential for integration into larger-scale initiatives
- For research projects, evidence that the results have the potential to be widely applicable and useful to the library or archive communities

For planning grant proposals, evidence that findings and other products will be used to measure successful accomplishment of project goals and outcomes.

### 3. Project Design

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- Evidence that the project proposes efficient, effective, and reasonable approaches to accomplish its goals and objectives
- Evidence that methodology and design are appropriate to the scope of the project
- Evidence that the project uses existing or emerging standards or best practices
- If products such as digital collections, software tools, data sets (including data used to measure successful accomplishment of project goals) will be generated by the project, evidence that the applicant has considered key technical details and has included the Digital Stewardship Supplementary Information Form.

#### **4. Diversity Plan [if applicable] - *please include in Project Design comments***

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- Identification of the diverse communities that will be served by the project
- Description of the unique service needs for the identified population that will be served by the proposed project
- Explanation for why this particular population was chosen
- Explanation of how the proposed project will address the library service needs of those communities, particularly the needs of traditionally underserved groups or communities

#### **5. Project Resources: Personnel, Time, Budget**

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- Evidence that the applicant will complete the project activities in the time allocated through the effective deployment and management of resources, including personnel, money, facilities, equipment, and supplies
- Evidence of sound financial management coupled with an appropriate and cost-efficient budget
- Evidence that the applicant has the ability to meet any applicable cost share requirement
- Evidence that the project personnel have appropriate experience and expertise and will commit adequate time to accomplish project activities
- If the project includes a partnership, evidence that all partners are active contributors to the partnership activities

#### **6. Communications Plan [not required for Planning Grants]**

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- Evidence that the results, products, models, findings, processes, and benefits of this project will be communicated freely and effectively to the library field and to other professional organizations and communities
- Evidence that communication activities will be ongoing throughout the project lifecycle rather than occur simply at the end of the project
- Evidence that the project will seek feedback from various stakeholders

- Evidence that the communities described in the Statement of Need section can be reached and served through the proposed communications plan
- 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

#### **7. Sustainability [not required for Planning Grants, National Forum Grants, or Research Grants]**

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- Extent to which the project's benefits will continue beyond the grant period of performance, 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
- Extent to which you have planned to build buy-in or adoption among others in the field
- Extent to which the project will lead to systemic change within the organization as well as within the archive and/or library fields
- Plans for preserving and sustaining any digitized collections, software and supporting documentation, information systems, and other technology tools

#### **8. Application Overview**

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Any additional comments about your score or the proposal overall. Please make sure that your comments are aligned with your numeric score.

## Appendix III: 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. Please complete and submit your reviews by February 15, 2016.

### 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 applications, click **VIEW**.
- Before you can begin to review any of the applications, 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 applications.

### 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 application. 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 application you are assigning to review. Click **Application Overview** to submit an overall score.
- Note: **Funding Priorities** does not apply. Please ignore this.
- Once you have completed an application review, click the **SAVE & CLOSE** box at the bottom of the screen. This will return you to the **Applications List** and allow you to choose another application 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 **Applications List** and proceed with the review process.

## Completing Your Online Reviews

- Once you have reviewed all applications assigned to you, the Application Review Status column should read **COMPLETE** beside each application.
- 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

### **Background**

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?**

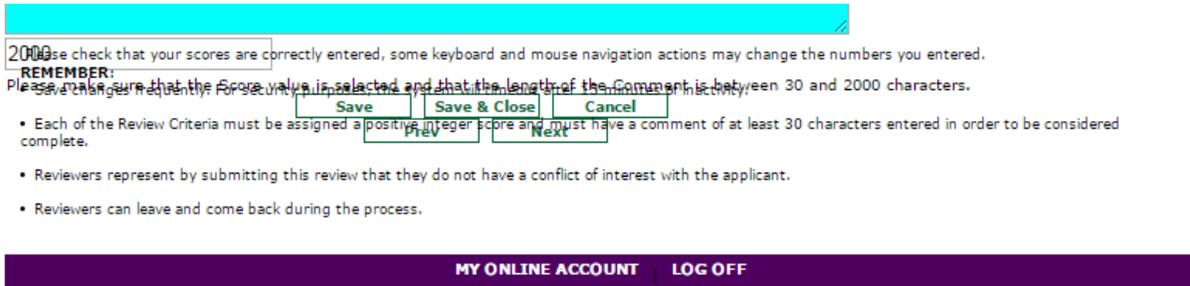
No. Please contact IMLS staff for help if you need your password reset or have any other problems.

### **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.

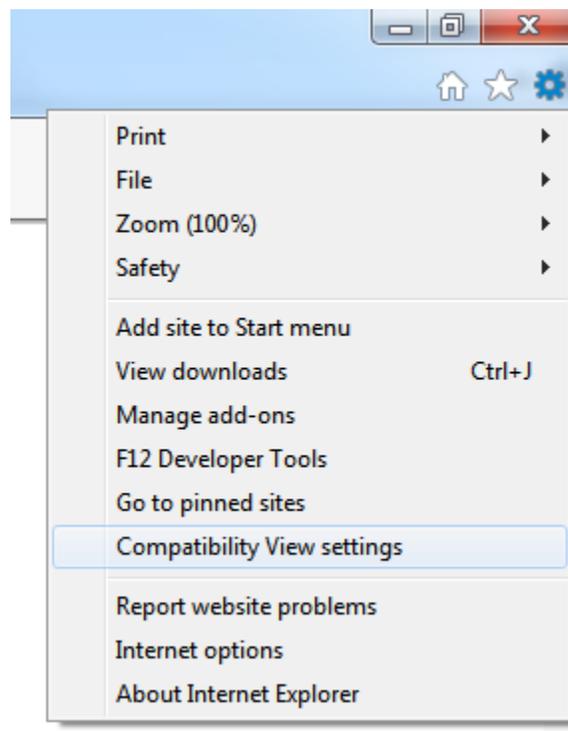
## Appendix IV: Online Reviewer System Troubleshooting

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:

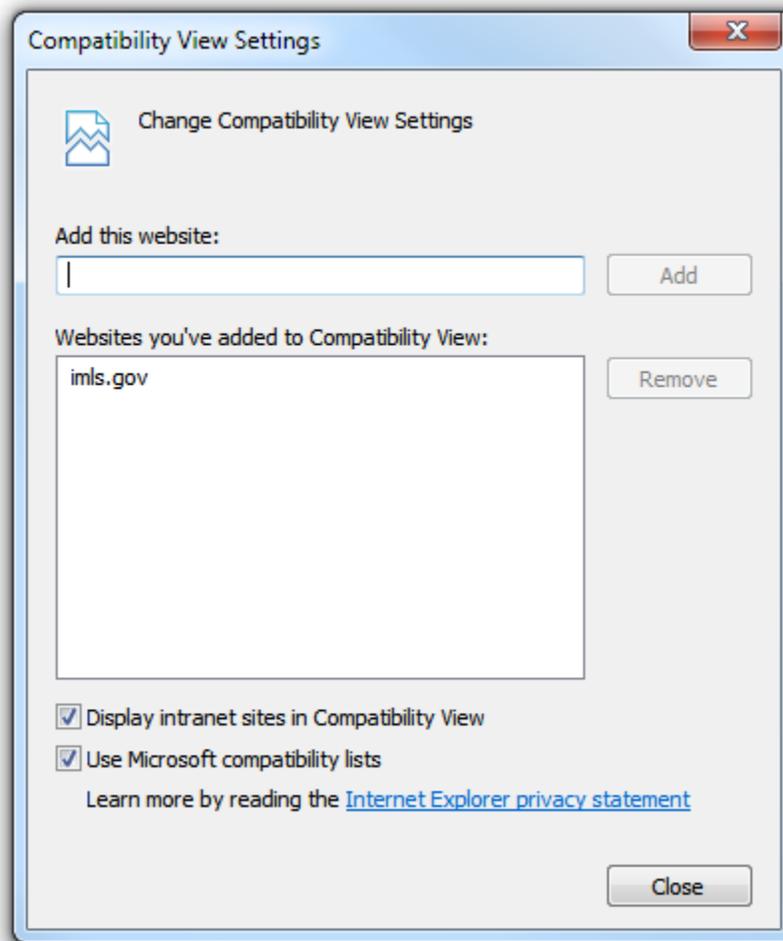


To resolve this issue, you must access the system **using Internet Explorer with Compatibility View (or Compatibility Mode) enabled**. In IE 11, this can be accomplished with the following steps:

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.