



Field Reviewer Handbook

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Office of Museum Services
Fiscal Year 2024

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Welcome!

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a peer reviewer for this year's Inspire! Grants for Small Museums grant program. We hope you find this to be a rewarding experience and draw satisfaction from helping museums across the country create engaging learning environments, address the needs of their communities, and serve as trusted stewards of the collections they hold in trust for the public. We assure you that your contribution of time and expertise will be invaluable to IMLS and to the applicants who will receive your comments.

In this handbook, you will find the information you need to carry out field review, including information about the program, tips for writing effective comments, and three appendices with important reference material. Instructions for using eGMS Reach, our grants management system, are accessible in the [How to Review Applications in eGMS Reach job aid](#).

If you have any questions about this material or the processes described, please do not hesitate to contact your panel chair at any time.

Once again, thank you for the service you are about to render to museums and communities throughout the nation.

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums Overview

Introduction

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums (Inspire) is a special initiative of the Museums for America grant program. It is designed to support small museums of all disciplines in project-based efforts to serve the public through exhibitions, educational/interpretive programs, digital learning resources, policy development and institutional planning, technology enhancements, professional development, community outreach, audience development, and/or collections management, curation, care, and conservation.

Projects are expected to:

- Focus on a key component of the institution's strategic plan,
- Reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter, and
- Generate measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge addressed.

IMLS does not define what a "small" museum is. Rather, IMLS invited applicants to consider whether their organization is a good fit for this special initiative for small museums. Applicants were asked to think about a range of attributes that describe their organization, including, but not limited to:

- number of staff members and volunteers;
- estimate of total person-hours worked per week;
- operating budget and sources of revenue;
- number and types of objects in the collection;
- size of facility and property;
- types and numbers of audiences served; and
- size relative to other organizations of the same discipline, or within the same geographic region.

Program Goals and Objectives

Reflecting IMLS's agency-level goals, Inspire! Grants for Small Museums has a single program goal and four objectives associated with it. Each applicant should align their proposed project with one or more of the associated objectives. The choice of objective(s) should be identified clearly in the Narrative (see Section D2c of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)). The choice of objective also informs the choice of project category (i.e., Lifelong Learning, Institutional Capacity, and Collections Stewardship and Access). This information is requested on the IMLS Museum Program Information Form.

Program Goal: Build the capacity of small museums to provide museum services to their communities.

- Objective 1: Support the development of cross-disciplinary learning experiences in small museums.
- Objective 2: Support the professional development of the small-museum workforce.
- Objective 3: Support the development of policies and institutional plans for small museums.
- Objective 4: Support the management and care of collections in small museums.

Funding Amounts

Inspire requests for IMLS funds may range from \$5,000 to \$75,000, including both direct and indirect costs. There are two funding levels and they differ in cost share requirement.

- Small projects requesting between \$5,000 and \$25,000 in federal grant funds do not require a cost share.
- Large projects requesting between \$25,001 and \$75,000 must include at least a 1:1 cost share from non-federal sources.

Step-by-Step Instructions for Reviewers

At this stage, IMLS has screened applications only for institutional eligibility and application completeness. We are counting on you to determine how good a job each applicant does in:

- meeting the goal and objectives of the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums grant program, and
- presenting a clear justification for the project, detailing the project workplan, and articulating the project results.

Step 1: Sign in to eGMS Reach

eGMS Reach is IMLS's platform that you will use to access and review applications. To securely access eGMS Reach, all users are required to have an account through Login.gov. You will receive an email with the subject line "eGMS Reach Account Information" that includes a link to the reviewer portal. If you do not receive such an email, please check your junk folder. If you still do not see the email, contact imls-museumreviewers@imls.gov.

Once you have the email, please visit <https://grants.imls.gov/Reach/> and follow the instructions located in the [How to Use Login.gov to Access eGMS Reach](#) Job Aid to create a Login.gov account or link your email to an existing Login.gov account.

Instructions for navigating eGMS Reach are available in the [How to Review Applications in eGMS Reach Job Aid](#), which is accessible on the IMLS website here: <https://www.imls.gov/grants/peer-review/reviewer-resources/museum-reviewer-resources>.

Step 2. Consider Field Review Criteria and Applications

We recommend that you begin by reviewing the [Inspire! Grants for Small Museums FY 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) to which applicants have responded in creating their applications. This document is also available in the Shared Files for all Panel Participants section of the Files and Forms tab in eGMS Reach. Then, read the applications, keeping in mind the review criteria for each section of the Narrative. The review criteria are provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity in Section E, on the evaluation forms, and on the next page. You will not need to reference each bullet point in your comments, but these questions should guide your thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of each application.

Review Criteria for Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Project Justification

- How well does the proposal align with the selected Inspire! Grants for Small Museums project category and objective(s)? See Section A2 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- Are the ways in which this project advances the museum's strategic plan specific and measurable?
- How well has the applicant used relevant data and best practices to describe the need, problem, or challenge to be addressed?
- Has the applicant appropriately defined the target group(s) and beneficiaries, as applicable, for this work?
- Have the target group and other project stakeholders been involved appropriately in planning the project?
- *For Collections Stewardship and Access projects:* Are the collections and/or records that are the focus of the project and their current condition described and quantified in enough detail?

Project Work Plan

- Are the proposed activities informed by relevant theory and practice?
- Are the goals, assumptions, and risks clearly stated?
- Do the identified staff, partners, consultants, and service providers possess the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully?
- Are the time, financial, personnel, and other resources identified appropriate for the scope and scale of the project?
- Is the proposed Performance Measurement Plan likely to generate the required measures of Effectiveness, Efficiency, Quality, and Timeliness?
- If present, does the Digital Products Plan reflect appropriate practices and standards for creating and managing the types of digital products proposed?
- Will the proposed methods for tracking the project's progress toward achieving the intended results allow course adjustments when necessary and result in reliable and measurable information about the results of the project?

Project Results

- Are the project's intended results clearly articulated, realistic, meaningful, and linked to the need, problem, or challenge addressed by the project?
- Is the plan to effect meaningful change in knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes solidly grounded and appropriately structured?
- Is it clear that the federal investment made through this grant will generate identifiable benefits to society?
- Will the products created by the project be made available and accessible to the target group?
- Is the plan to sustain the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance reasonable and practical?
- *For Collections Stewardship and Access projects:* Will the care, condition, management, access to, or use of the museum collections and/or records improve as a result of the project?

About Organization Size

Applicants were asked to consider whether their organization is a good fit for this special initiative for small museums and discuss a range of attributes that describe their organization. These could include but were not limited to: number of staff members and volunteers; estimate of total person-hours worked per week; operating budget and sources of revenue; number and types of objects in the collection; size of facility and property; types and numbers of audiences served; and size relative to other organizations of the same discipline, or within the same geographic region. Please look for this discussion in the Organizational Profile, the Museum Program Information Form, and Narrative sections of each application and compare it to the Program Description in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (pages 2-3). Please indicate whether the organization made the case that it is a small museum by selecting one of the following sentences in the evaluation form in eGMS Reach:

Option 1: Yes, the applicant makes a convincing case that the organization qualifies as a small museum.

Option 2: No, the applicant does not make a convincing case that the organization qualifies as a small museum.

Step 3. Draft Comments

For each application you review, we ask you to write a constructive and substantive comment for each section of the Narrative: **Project Justification**, **Project Work Plan**, and **Project Results**. All three sections of the Narrative have equal weight and are equally important in identifying the overall strengths and weaknesses of an application.

You may wish to prepare your comments in a separate document for later copying and pasting into the eGMS Reach evaluation form.

When drafting your comments ...

- Take all the review criteria for each section into consideration. It is not necessary to provide the review criteria questions in your comments.
- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Judge the application on its own merits, and do not base your evaluation on any **prior** knowledge of an institution.
- Make sure your comments justify the scores you provide. A highly complimentary comment does not remove the sting of a low score, and a negative comment does not even out a high one. Comments and scores must complement each other and make sense as a whole.

Characteristics of effective and poor field reviewer comments:

Effective comments...	Poor comments...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• are presented in a constructive manner.• are both substantive and easy to read and understand.• reflect the resources of the institution.• are specific to the individual application.• reflect the numeric score assigned.• highlight the application's strengths and identify areas for improvement.• are directed to applicants—not IMLS or panel reviewers—for their use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• simply summarize or paraphrase the applicant's own words.• make derogatory remarks.• penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money.• offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information.• compare the application to others in the review group.• make vague or overly general statements.• question an applicant's honesty or integrity.

See Appendix C for examples of effective comments, as they appear to applicants.

What should not be considered in your reviews

Sometimes reviewers ask about or mention characteristics that are outside the scope of the Inspire review criteria. This is a list of commonly identified factors that you should NOT consider when reading Inspire proposals:

- An institution's financial or staffing needs
- Whether a project is innovative
- Whether a project is new or a resubmission
- An institution's indirect cost rate (IMLS honors indirect cost rate agreements that an institution has negotiated with another federal agency, or accepts the 10% rate in the absence of a negotiated agreement)

Bias in the Review Process

Everyone has biases, which are informed by our own experiences as well as our cultural and social environments. Recognizing this is an important step in mitigating the effects of bias in your reviews. The chart below shows different types of bias that commonly happen in the review process. Think about what may feel familiar as you review applications.

AFFINITY BIAS	CONFIRMATION BIAS	CONTRAST EFFECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Favoring those like you Applicants who “speak the lingo” get less scrutiny and higher scores Seen as more believable/ trustworthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing on information that aligns with preconceived notions Rejecting ideas or actions that challenge held notions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluating quality and other characteristics relative to its surroundings (e.g., other applications in review group) rather than on its own merits Can result in unfair assessment of risk and capacity

As you review, pay attention to your preferences—for example, a project may be well conceived and ready to implement even if the narrative is poorly formatted or has spelling errors. We all have biases but staying aware of your preferences and what makes you feel comfortable can interrupt your bias and help ensure that every application is reviewed fairly.

Example Biased Comments

The following comments contain bias	Explanation
"I couldn't figure out what this project was about because the narrative was filled with spelling mistakes that were enormously distracting." Score 2	Comment demonstrates affinity bias.
"While it's important that museums connect with their communities, they should not be the lead for social service projects like a food bank in the museum. That type of work is not mission critical for museums." Score 3	Comment demonstrates confirmation bias.
"The risks identified in the narrative were not as realistic and robust as those I read in other proposals." Score 8	Comment demonstrates contrast effect bias.

Step 4: Assign scores

Assign a single preliminary score to the entire application. Use a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being Inadequate/Insufficient and 10 being Exceptional.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Inadequate/ Insufficient				Good			Exceptional		

Strive to bring the same approach to all the applications you review. Evaluate each application using the criteria in the guidelines and in the Reviewer Resources—not against other proposals. It is

theoretically possible for you to have been assigned all “Exceptional” proposals, or all “Inadequate” proposals, meaning that you could arrive at all very high scores or very low scores. You do not need to evaluate on a curve of any kind.

If the project is misaligned to the goals of the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums grant program or the objective that the applicant selected, your comments and scores should reflect it.

Step 5: Review Work

IMLS is one of the few federal agencies that provides reviewers’ comments to applicants, directly and in their entirety without editing. We do this to make sure our process is as transparent as possible, and to provide anonymous feedback to applicants from their peers. If an applicant is unsuccessful, then they may use these comments to improve their proposal for resubmission. If they are successful, they may use the comments to improve their funded projects.

We hear repeatedly that getting your comments is one of the most highly valued things about IMLS museum grant programs, therefore, review your draft comments and preliminary scores. Adjust your scores, if necessary, to reflect your written evaluation more accurately. Scores should support comments, and comments should justify scores.

See Appendix C for examples of effective comments, as they appear to applicants.

Step 6: Enter Scores and Comments Before the Evaluation Due Date

When you are ready to enter your scores and comments, visit <https://grants.imls.gov/Reach/> and sign in with your Login.gov email and password. Refer to the [How to Review Applications in eGMS Reach Job Aid](#) for instructions on completing comments and selecting scores. Responding to Museum/Organizational Unit Size

The screenshot shows a web application interface for reviewing proposals. At the top, there are two buttons: 'Recusal / Conflict of Interest' and 'Mark Evaluation as Complete', with the latter highlighted by an orange circle. Below this is a text box with instructions: 'Write a constructive and substantive comment for each section of the Narrative: Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results. Assign a single score for the entire application using a scale of 1 to 10 as described in the attached Inspire! Grants for Small Museums Reviewer Handbook. Finally, select one of two options concerning the museum/organizational unit size.' A sidebar on the left contains links for 'Project Justification', 'Project Work Plan', 'Project Results', 'Overall Score', 'Museum/Organizational Unit Size', and 'Museum/Organizational Unit Size (Optional Comment)'. The main content area is titled 'About Organization Size' and contains a paragraph of text explaining the criteria for being a small museum. Below this text are two radio button options: 'Yes, the applicant makes a convincing case that the organization qualifies as a small museum.' and 'No, the applicant does not make a convincing case that the organization qualifies as a small museum.' An orange arrow points to the 'No' option. At the bottom right of the form, there are two buttons: 'Save' and 'Save and Next', with the 'Save' button highlighted by an orange circle.

Screenshot. Responding to Organizational Size

Select one of two options concerning the museum/organizational unit size. You may enter optional comments about museum/organizational unit size in the next tab.

Your reviews must be completed and entered in eGMS Reach by the **Evaluation Due Date** listed in the Panel Information tab in eGMS Reach.

The screenshot shows the 'Panel Information' tab in eGMS Reach. The interface includes a navigation bar with tabs for 'Panel Information', 'Files and Forms', 'Applications', 'Messages', and 'Readings'. The 'Panel Information' tab is active. Below the navigation bar, the 'Panel Information' section contains a table with the following data:

Date(s)	2/11/2022
Coordinator	
Chair	Helen Wechsler 202-653-4779 hwechsler@imls.gov
Evaluation Due Date	3/4/2023

Below the table, there is a section for 'Instructions' with the following text:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as an IMLS peer reviewer for the FY22 Museums for America grant cycle.

Guidance for reviewers is accessible under the Panel Files Tab below.

Before proceeding to the Application Tab, you must:

1. Review the Conflicts of Interest Statement located under your Personal Files (to review the statement, click the paper icon); and
2. Certify that you have reviewed the Conflicts of Interest Statement and that you have no conflicts with the applications that have been assigned to you (to certify that you have reviewed the statement and have no conflicts, click the pen icon to access the click-through signature function).

The deadline for completing your reviews is Friday, March 4 at 11:59:59 PM EST.

Screenshot. Panel Information tab illustrating where to find the Evaluation Due Date.

Step 7: Manage Your Copies

Keep your applications and any notes until **August 31, 2024**, in case there are questions from IMLS staff. Continue to maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review by keeping electronic and paper copies in a secure place. After August 31, 2024, delete electronic copies and shred paper copies of the applications and notes.

Appendix A: Confidentiality and Application and Review Process

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. Because AI generative tools rely upon the submission of substantial information, and because AI users are unable to control where the information they have submitted will be sent, saved, viewed, or used in the future, IMLS explicitly prohibits its peer reviewers from using AI tools to analyze and critique IMLS grant applications.

While funded applications become a matter of record, IMLS does not release information about applications that are not funded through our programs, nor do we share peer reviewers' names or other identifiable information. You may share that you have served as an IMLS peer reviewer, but do not share details about the program on which you are working or the applications you are considering. This applies to communications that are in person, in email, and through all forms of social media.

Application and Review Process

The success of IMLS grant programs depends upon the quality of its peer review process, through which hundreds of reviewers consider thousands of eligible applications fairly, candidly, and impartially in order to make recommendations for funding each year. Below is a summary of the process from application submission through award announcements.

1. Organizations submit their applications electronically using [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), the central portal of the United States government for receipt of electronic applications.
2. IMLS receives the applications, and staff members check them for organizational eligibility and application completeness.
3. IMLS staff members identify a pool of available peer reviewers with appropriate expertise. Peer review takes place in one or two tiers, depending on the grant program: field review, panel review, or both. Each complete application submitted by an eligible organization typically receives between three and six reviews.
4. For the applications ranked most highly by peer reviewers, IMLS staff members carefully assess the budgets and past organizational performance.
5. IMLS staff members provide a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director.
6. The IMLS Director makes all final funding decisions.
7. IMLS notifies all applicants whether they have received an award. With their notifications, all applicants receive anonymous copies of the field and/or panel reviews. IMLS also sends notification of the awards to each participating reviewer.

Appendix B: Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

As a Reviewer for IMLS, you perform a vital role in ensuring the integrity of the 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 program officer 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 North, SW, Suite 4000, Washington, DC 20024-2135.

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 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.

Sample Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a Reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (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 prior to submission of the application) 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.

Pending applications are confidential. 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. 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 other reason.

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

Certification

I acknowledge that I have reviewed the ethics training materials and the Conflict of Interest Statement above. To the best of my knowledge, I have no conflict of interest that would preclude my service to the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Note: Once you have reviewed this document, return to eGMS Reach to affirm that you have approved its contents.

Appendix C: Example Peer Reviewer Comments

The following samples are the anonymized comments made available to both successful and unsuccessful applicants after funding decisions are announced.

Sample 1: Field Peer Reviewer Evaluation
Program: Inspire! Grants for Small Museums
Category: Collections Stewardship and Access

IGSM-123456-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum

Field Reviewer 1

Project Justification:

The museum has crafted a thoughtful and appropriate grant proposal which directly aligns with Goal 3: Collections Stewardship and Access, focusing on Objective 3.2: Conservation Treatment. The conservation treatment, exhibition, and subsequent museum programming involving the 5 culturally and artistically significant objects will help to advance the museum’s strategic plan and mission to collect and preserve the material culture and historical record of their town, and to use these resources in service to the public through educational experiences and outreach to the community.

The reviewer appreciates the holistic approach in the museum’s proposal involving the conservation of the 5 objects, the revision and installation of upgraded exhibition panels, and the incorporation of the public lecture series highlighting the conservation process throughout the project. The target group of the local community, visitors, tourists, and researchers will undoubtedly benefit from this multi-component project.

The reviewer greatly appreciates the amount of detail the museum has included in their proposal about the objects' history and artistic significance, as well as the inclusion of the object descriptions, individual conservation assessments, and treatment proposals - this is very useful information for understanding the condition issues and overall need for the project. Images would have provided the reviewer with a better understanding of condition issues, however, the descriptions in the proposals appear satisfactory.

Project Work Plan:

The proposed conservation treatments by conservation professionals are appropriate and adhere to the AIC Code of Ethics. All staff, partners, and service providers assigned to the project appear to be well qualified and experienced in their respective fields. The conservators listed for the project contain ample relative conservation experience; the reviewer has no issue with the professionals being solicited for the project. The museum has acknowledged any risks associated with the project and appear to be ready to adapt accordingly. The Project Timeline provides ample time for conservation treatment, acquisition of new exhibition panels, and preparation for conservation lecture series. All funding allocations appear aligned with the task at hand. The Performance Measurement Plan clearly articulates how they will generate the required measures of effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and timeliness. Quarterly check-ins and project tracking will be handled by museum staff. The reviewer would like to see more precise information regarding the person responsible for the check-ins.

Project Results:

The project's intended results are very well articulated, realistic, and directly related to the need addressed by the project. The conservation, exhibition, and educational programming surround the preservation of the 5 objects corresponds directly to the museum’s strategic plan and mission. The institution has made notable progress in prioritizing their collection management policies, improving storage and exhibit facilities, and increasing access via ongoing digitization projects; these efforts demonstrate that the museum is capable of sustaining the benefits of the conservation project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance. The reviewer acknowledges this momentum and feels confident that the museum will continue on this trajectory. The care, condition, management, and access to their museum collections will undoubtedly improve as a result of the conservation project, granting greater access for the museum’s target group through exhibition, educational enrichment activities, and the overall preservation of the collection in perpetuity.

Overall Score

9

Museum/Organizational Unit Size

Yes

Museum/Organizational Unit Size (Optional Comment)

N/A

Sample 2: Field Peer Reviewer Evaluation
Program: Inspire! Grants for Small Museums
Category: Institutional Capacity

IGSM-123457-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum

Field Reviewer 2

Project Justification:

It is good that you're reviewing like-institutions and keeping close watch of your digital visitorship. You have a strong grasp of the interconnectedness of museum operations. However, the proposal needs more focus and specifics. The narrative style of the Strategic Plan makes it difficult to prioritize goals and objectives. Your answers alternately apply to development of professional standards, then to outreach, engagement, and collections accessibility.

More targeted, concrete information would create a better sense of your in-person efforts. For example, what are the numbers of school groups/homeschoolers you serve? Do you solicit feedback from teachers/parents and how so? Your current public programs are impressive in light of such limited staff, but you emphasize outreach growth—in what way? What specific types of outreach do you envision moving forward?

Project Work Plan:

You have an extremely well-qualified team and robust tools to execute the plan, though there are some unaddressed risks. Consultants have their own demands and are not a long-term solution. The hiring and training of the Executive Director is scheduled for the busiest time of year for your type of museum. Do you have sufficient staff to run the museum while bringing on new leadership and simultaneously implementing a new database system?

There is also some confusion and significant overlap of roles and responsibilities. The Executive Director will manage many broad, disparate aspects, which also seem to be covered by the Director of Operations. Who will manage the Constituent Resource Management (CRM) system and develop content for constituent surveys? Can you use your volunteers to digitize or input data? If so, you need concrete ways to measure progress, such as regular data reports to mitigate data corruption.

The work timeline lacks any points of review or integration of review results. Despite a small staff, you will need dedicated moments to track progress and course-correct more often than monthly and quarterly, as described in the Performance Measurements grid. Likewise, the timeline does not include outreach development or implementation, which is one of the major purposes of the grant.

Project Results:

There is no question, this award will enhance your ability to serve your audiences, provide some stability, and give you a good foundation for future growth. The direction of that growth, and the long-term support for it, are less clear. While you dismiss the concept of products, you will have both tangible and intangible results from your work. The flexible, robust database will need to be maintained going forward. You will have more visitors walking through your doors and attending your events. Your staff will need leadership as demands on them (and your facilities) increase. These results will need to be managed, directed, and funded in the future.

Overall Score

6

Museum/Organizational Unit Size

Yes

Museum/Organizational Unit Size (Optional Comment)

N/A

Sample 3: Field Peer Reviewer Evaluation
Program: Inspire! Grants for Small Museums
Category: Lifelong Learning

IGSM-123458-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum

Field Reviewer 3

Project Justification:

The applicant has chosen the goal of Champion Lifelong Learning, Objective 1.1 Advance Shared Knowledge for their application for new exhibit display cases. The project advances the organization's strategic plan by addressing their desire to engage with their general visitor audience. The applicant believes having better cases will allow for more visually interesting exhibits that will attract more visitors, but there is no specific information or data provided that says that past or current visitors have taken issue or complained about the cases. There is no clear indication given of how new exhibit cases will specifically engage and inspire, nor is this a measurable goal. While the applicant mentions that feedback and surveys will be used to ask for thoughts on the new cases, this is not entirely a good measure of the success of the cases because it is likely many of the visitors will have not seen the previous cases and setup of the space to make a comparison of how they like the design. The applicant says the need for the new cases is because the cases are difficult to use and put objects in, as well as to provide more space for programs, but with the provided images and floor plan, it does not seem like they will be gaining any more space. While the current cases may be older and not the best to use, it is unclear if the issue with the display is from a staff perspective, or if through surveys or feedback from visitors there have been complaints about the display and ability to see items, read labels, etc. Additionally, the applicant wants to increase the use of the space for programs but does not provide data or background on how often they have to move to other sites, if they have to turn down opportunities because of the space concerns, or similar information. Finally, it is unclear who the target audience and stakeholders are in this project as there is no specific mention of types of groups, such as school children, local clubs, etc. who want to improve the space or even feedback from general audience that they desire an improved experience.

Project Work Plan:

While the project work plan and the staff assigned to the project all make sense and are qualified to the work, it is unclear to me how the project could be determined to be successful. The results of the project are new cases with new exhibits, but those exhibits and ideas have not been laid out. In addition, based solely on the design of the proposed exhibit cases the applicant wishes to purchase, I'm not entirely sure how this increases their ability to show off a more varied array of objects as the layout and design of the chosen cases for purchase seem limiting in similar way to the existing cases. While the new cases may be more easily moved, it's unclear how the chosen designs will offer more opportunity to showcase larger items since the cases are not that big either. Finally, based again on the layout provided with the existing cases against the wall, it seems they have more floor plan to work with for chairs and events than they would with new cases that would be scattered throughout the space.

Project Results:

The project results for the applicant are new cases that will allow them to do better exhibitions that will provide a better experience to their visitors. The enhanced space will allow them to do more - more programs, better exhibitions, more objects, but there are no specific metrics provided (ex: 15% more objects can be shown at any given time). The results for a more pleasing visual experience and creating higher quality exhibitions will be measured through surveys, but the applicant did not indicate that they had negative reviews, comments, or issues from visitors previously about the exhibits. In my opinion, the provided images of their existing setup, while not ideal, is still workable and attractive. This project is more suitable for funding by a local charitable organization or business partnership than federal investment.

Overall Score 2

Museum/Organizational Unit Size Yes

Museum/Organizational Unit Size (Optional Comment)

N/A