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2005
Field
Reviewer
Handbook

21st Century
Museum
Professionals

For information, call IMLS:

(202) 606-8539

(Before April 20, 2005)

(202) 653-4789

(After April 26, 2005)

or e-mail: jkthomas@imls.gov

Important

**PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 7 TO ACCESS THE
ONLINE REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS. REMEMBER,
TO ACCESS THE ONLINE REVIEW SYSTEM
YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS MUST BE THE SAME
AS WE HAVE ON FILE.**

Table of Contents

<i>part 1</i>	THE 21ST CENTURY MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS GRANTS REVIEW PROCESS	
	What is the 21st Century Museum Professionals Grants Program?	1
	The Program Process	2
	<i>How Are Applications Assigned to Field Review?</i>	2
	<i>What Does IMLS Do with the Field Reviews?</i>	2
	<i>How Does IMLS rank the applications?</i>	2
	<i>What is the Role of the 21 MP Sitting Review Panel?</i>	2
	<i>What happens before IMLS makes the Awards?</i>	3
	<i>How are your Reviews used?</i>	3
	<i>Can You Get Feedback on Your Performance?</i>	3
<i>part 2</i>	APPLICATION REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS	
	Check Shipping Box	4
	Conflicts of Interest	4
	Confidentiality	4
	Application Completeness	4
	Eligibility	4
	Read Applications	4
	Evaluate Applications	4
	Qualities of a Good Proposal	5
	Assign Scores: Start with 5	5
	Type Size and Format	6

Review Your Work	6
Write Specific Comments and Assign Scores	6
Selecting Scores	7
Online Review Process	7
Good Comments	9
Poor Comments	9

part 3**REVIEWER MATERIAL**

Sign Reviewer Contract	11
Return Materials to IMLS	11
Keep Copies Until September 1	11

I. The 21MP Review Process

Thank you for offering to serve as a 21st Century Museum Professionals (21MP) field reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your expertise in museum operations, the skills necessary to perform museum operations, and the delivery of training to museum staff. The staff at IMLS has prepared this handbook specifically for field reviewers. It will provide you with the technical information you need. Please use it in tandem with this year's *21st Century Museum Professionals Grant Application and Guidelines*. Even if you have reviewed for other IMLS programs, you should review this booklet since 21MP is a new grant offering.

WHAT IS THE 21ST CENTURY MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS GRANTS PROGRAM?

The 21st Century Museum Professionals grant program provides an opportunity for museum professionals to build the knowledge and skills necessary for the operation of museums. The grant program supports leadership development for museum staff, in addition to supporting professional training in all areas of museum operation, including, but not limited to, interpretation, collections care, conservation, museum management, or financial management. Projects funded in the 21st Century Museum Professionals grant program should reach broad groups of museum professionals, throughout a city, a county, a state, a region, or the nation. IMLS anticipates that funded projects will increase both museum professionals' and their institutions' capacities to serve their communities.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

IMLS sees the 21st Century Museum Professionals grant program as an investment in museum professionals, both those already working in the museum field, as well as pre-professionals.

Eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Costs associated with evaluation of grant programs or activities
- Costs related to planning and maintenance of project partnerships
- Indirect or overhead costs
- Program development and implementation
- Purchase of equipment, materials, supplies, or services
- Staff training
- Staffing
- Travel
- Publication

Grant funds may not be used to support:

- Acquisition of collections
- Ceremonies
- Construction
- Contributions to endowments
- Costs incurred prior to the start of the grant period
- Entertainment
- Research
- Social activities

Questions about any information in this booklet?

Contact the IMLS Program Office at (202) 606-8539 (before April 20, 2005) or at (202) 653-4789 (after April 26, 2005) or by e-mail at jkthomas@imls.gov between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

**THE
PROGRAM
PROCESS**

- 1) Applicants receive the grant application booklet; they complete the application form.
- 2) IMLS receives the applications and checks them for completeness.
- 3) IMLS identifies a pool of available field reviewers. IMLS will assign three museum professionals to each application.

HOW ARE APPLICATIONS ASSIGNED TO FIELD REVIEW?

- 4) IMLS staff sorts the applications into groups based on the type of project. Then, the applications are sorted within these groups by request amount.

We may ask you to review an organization with a budget size that is either smaller or larger than those with which you are most experienced; in such case, you should pay close attention to the organization's resources. Each review group may contain applications from many types of organizations (eligible applicants include museums, museum service organizations, and institutions of higher education).

- 5) Field reviewers receive the applications, evaluate them, and return their reviews to IMLS.

WHAT DOES IMLS DO WITH THE FIELD REVIEWS?

- 6) IMLS processes comments and scores. Reviewers' scores are mathematically standardized to mitigate the effect of those who always use low or high scores. A single standardized score is produced from each reviewer for each application. This score is then used to rank the applications.

HOW DOES IMLS RANK THE APPLICATIONS?

- 7) Using a generally accepted mathematical formula – standard deviation – IMLS standardizes the scores and all applications. The final standardized scores from the field reviewers for each application are averaged to produce one average standardized score. All applications are ranked based on the standardized average, from highest to lowest. This ranking will be used to determine which applications are sent to the sitting review panel. The panel will make final recommendations based on the field review comments as well as their own expertise.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE 21MP SITTING REVIEW PANEL?

- 8) The 21MP sitting review panel meets to provide a second level of review and make final funding recommendations. IMLS asks the panel to look across the budget categories and make recommendations on the strongest applications. The 21MP review panel meets in Washington, DC in July after the field review period. IMLS asks superior past reviewers to serve on the panel. Panelists represent a cross-section of museums, museum service organizations, and those having specific expertise related to project activities. IMLS will ask panel members about issues pertinent to this year's competition and about improving the 21MP program, the application, and the process. IMLS staff provides a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director for approval.

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE IMLS MAKES THE AWARDS?

9) IMLS reviews the financial/accounting information and the budget sheets of each potential grantee.

10) IMLS awards the 21MP grants. The Director of IMLS makes the awards and announces them in September. At that time, IMLS notifies all applicants by mail whether or not they have received an award. We also send a list of grantees to all participating reviewers. With their notification, all applicants receive the reviews that their field reviewers and panelists completed. Applicants benefit tremendously from your thoughtful, constructive comments.

HOW ARE YOUR REVIEWS USED?

Your scores will determine the ranking of applications—which will go to the sitting panel, and which will not.

For those applications that go to panel review, your reviews will provide the basis for the panel review, guiding panelists to the strong and weak aspects of the application. If a panel-reviewed application is not funded, your review comments, along with those of panelists, will assist the applicant as they consider whether/how to revise their application for resubmission.

For those applications that are not ranked highly enough to go to panel, field review feedback will be the only guide as they consider whether/how to revise their project for resubmission.

Successful applicants point to good scores and positive comments as a stamp of approval for their program proposals. Applicants report that receiving IMLS awards enhances fundraising success with private foundations or state and local sources.

Unsuccessful applicants use reviewer comments to improve or change their applications for resubmission.

HOW CAN YOU GET FEEDBACK ON YOUR PERFORMANCE?

Field reviewers will receive information about their performance from IMLS. IMLS will mail you feedback on your performance regarding your strengths and weaknesses as a field reviewer. You will receive this information in October. Upon receiving your evaluation we invite you to call the IMLS Office of Museum Services to discuss your evaluation.

We greatly appreciate the tremendous amount of time and effort you have committed to being a reviewer. By participating in the peer review process, you are making a significant contribution to the 21st Century Museum Professionals grant program and are providing an invaluable service to the entire museum community. Thank you!

Questions about any information in this booklet?

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Application Review Instructions

This section of the handbook contains detailed information on how to review a 21st Century Museum Professionals grant application. If you think that you may not be able to review every proposal you have received, do not begin the review process. Instead, contact an IMLS staff person:

Jeannette Thomas
 (202) 606-8548 (before April 20, 2005)
 (202) 653-4685 (after April 26, 2005)
 or e-mail: jkthomas@imls.gov

CHECK SHIPPING BOX

If you have not already done so, refer to the contents on the Reviewer Checklist. Contact IMLS immediately if any of the items are missing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Read your list of applications to see if there are any potential conflicts of interest. Contact IMLS immediately if you have a conflict, or what may appear to be a conflict.

CONFIDENTIALITY

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

APPLICATION COMPLETENESS

Check your applications to make sure that all required information is included. Use the application checklist as a cross-reference. We only check the original copy for completeness. If any application appears to be incomplete do not score the applicant down, rather, contact IMLS immediately.

ELIGIBILITY

IMLS staff determines an institution's eligibility for 21MP funds by reading the Organizational Profile (see page 3.6 of the *21st Century Museum Professionals Grant Application and Guidelines*). You may read about eligibility requirements on page 1.3 of the *21st Century Museum Professionals Grant Application and Guidelines*. If you feel that a particular project does not meet the IMLS 21MP eligibility requirements, please contact the Office of Museum Services immediately. DO NOT under any circumstances contact an applicant directly.

READ APPLICATIONS

Read your applications to develop a feel for the range of responses. Before reading your applications, reread the narrative questions and guidelines on pages 2.2–2.3 of the *21st Century Museum Professionals Grant Application and Guidelines*. The listed items represent the types of information you should look for in the applicant's responses and should serve as guideposts for your review.

EVALUATE APPLICATIONS

Read your applications again. Take notes as you read. Draft your comments for each of the five narrative responses.

- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- You MAY 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.
- Address the applicant's *entire* response to each narrative question.
- Consider a project's strengths *and* weaknesses.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD PROPOSAL

ASSIGN DRAFT SCORES: START WITH 4

- Acknowledge and compliment strengths.
- Offer practical suggestions for improving weaknesses.
- Judge the application on its own merits.
- Consider whether the applicant has the resources to successfully complete the project.
- Remember that the panelists and the IMLS staff use your comments to help unsuccessful applicants improve their collections care and future applications.
- Comments should be easy to read and understand.
- Comments should be specific to the individual applicant; vague, general statements are not helpful.
- Comments should *analyze* the narrative section of the application; summarizing or paraphrasing the applicant's own words will not help the applicant.
- Comments should address both positive aspects as well as areas for improvement.

A good 21MP proposal will demonstrate how museum professionals at multiple institutions or from diverse audiences will acquire, improve, and maintain their knowledge of and skills for museums operations.

Assign preliminary scores to each narrative section.

Use a scale of 1 through 7

1 = lowest; 7 = highest (see scoring definitions on page 7)

- Use whole numbers only
- Do not use fractions, decimals, zeros, or more than one number.

We suggest that you use the *Start With 4* method to assign scores. If all field reviewers adopt this same approach, 21MP panelists will see greater consistency in the use of our scoring definitions. If you have questions, please contact us.

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

To *Start With 4*

- Finish drafting your narrative comments.
- Make sure that your comments accurately reflect your opinions.
- **4 = adequate (provides adequate support for project activities).**
- Consider a score of 4 to represent an adequate range of project feasibility—think of 4 as your starting point.
- Adjust up or down from 4 according to your written comments. If the project seems adequate or average (i.e., neither particularly strong nor particularly weak, but somewhere in the middle), retain the 4;
 - A little better than average, assign a 5;
 - Much better than average, assign a 6;
 - Minimally acceptable, drop down from a 4 to a 3;
 - Inadequate, choose a 3.
- Reserve a score of 1 for what appear to be overall *extremely* poor projects and a score of 7 for *exceptionally* good projects.
- Be fair and objective.

Questions about any information in this booklet?

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- Applications are not ranked by the raw scores you assign but by the relative performance of each application compared to all others. Awarding only high scores will not benefit those applicants; awarding only low scores will not penalize those applicants.

As you review, please keep the following two technical issues in mind: typeface and application format. DO NOT consider them when determining your scores. IMLS will assign penalties as needed. However, if you have serious concerns about a project's eligibility within the IMLS guidelines, call the IMLS 21MP staff immediately to discuss your concerns.

TYPE SIZE AND FORMAT

The application does not provide a form for the narrative part of the application. Applicants can divide the space for narrative responses as they wish, as long as all questions are addressed in number order as indicated in the application guidelines and the narrative response does not exceed seven pages. A minimum one-quarter inch margin should be left on the sides and bottom of the page.

We also require applicants to use a type size that measures no more than six lines per vertical inch and to use standard spacing between letters.

Please use your common sense when judging type size or page format. We developed these rules primarily to help reviewers. You do not need to actually measure the type; if you can read the text without eyestrain, it probably meets our specifications.

- If you do see a problem, however,
- Call IMLS.
 - Review the application. DO NOT lower an applicant's score because of reduced type or reformatting.
 - DO NOT note the problem on your review sheet itself, but rather attach a separate note for IMLS only.

We will assign penalties as needed.

Review your draft comments and preliminary scores.

When you are finished, proofread your reviews. *A review with even one missing score or comment cannot be accepted by the online review system.* Adjust your scores, if necessary, to more accurately reflect your written evaluation.

REVIEW YOUR WORK

WRITE SPECIFIC COMMENTS AND ASSIGN SCORES

Type your final comments and scores (for narrative sections 1-5 plus general comments if applicable) on your online review sheets. For each application, you need to complete an online review containing:

- written comments about the applicant's narrative responses.
- a corresponding score for each response.
- general comments, if applicable.

Note: make use of all the space provided on the online review sheets

SELECTING SCORES

After you write your comments, select an appropriate score from 1 to 7 (1=lowest; 7=highest) for each of the five narrative responses using the IMLS scoring definitions that follow. Enter the scores on your online review sheets. Your typed comments and corresponding scores should always support each other.

The definitions of the numerical scores are:

<u>SCORE</u>	<u>DEFINITION</u>
1	Applicant's response provides insufficient information for evaluation.
2	Applicant's response provides inadequate support for the proposed project activities.
3	Applicant's response provides minimal support for the proposed project.
4	Applicant's response provides adequate support for the proposed project activities.
5	Applicant's response provides good support for the proposed project activities.
6	Applicant's response provides superior support for the proposed project activities.
7	Applicant's response provides exceptional support for the proposed project activities.

Your online reviews are confidential; only IMLS staff can view them.

THE ONLINE REVIEW PROCESS

IMPORTANT

- Assign only whole numbers to each of the seven narrative responses.
- Do not use fractions, decimals, zeros or more than one number in scoring individual sections.
- Score all responses, do not leave any blank.

All reviewers will use the online review process. It is easy to do. All you need is internet access. There are no review sheets to type up on a typewriter or handwrite, or hard to read computer diskettes, or sheets that you have to reformat on your personal computer. Further, you do not have to fax your reviews to us. When completed, IMLS can print a copy to forward to the panelists. Just follow these steps:

Access this link: <http://e-services.imls.gov/grantapps/reviewers.aspx>

Your login is: your e-mail address that is on file with IMLS

Your password is: password

When you log in and create your user account, you will need to create a new password.

The instructions for creating and submitting your reviews will be at your fingertips. When you visit the site, there is a hotlink for technical questions. These questions will be sent directly to our computer technicians that are working with us to design this system. If you have other questions about reviewing, please contact IMLS staff.

When you have completed assigning scores and giving comments for each application assigned to you, you will submit the entire review to IMLS. Then, please remember to print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files.

Questions about any information in this booklet?

Contact the IMLS Program Office at (202) 606-8539 (before April 20, 2005) or at (202) 653-4789 (after April 26, 2005) or by e-mail at jkthomas@imls.gov between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

REMINDERS

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

- When accessing the system you can only use the e-mail address we have on file for you.
- We strongly recommend that you type your comments using Microsoft Word and then cut and paste them into the online review sheet.
- Once you submit your reviews, you cannot go back in and make revisions. To do so, you must contact IMLS and we will authorize your re-entry into the system so you can make changes. However, prior to submitting your reviews you can repeatedly enter and exit the system without losing your information.
- The online review system seems to work best with either of these two web browsers – Netscape and Internet Explorer.

**GOOD
COMMENTS**

Some of the characteristics of good comments are:

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

Remember, both successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to improve their institutions and future applications. Each of the sample comments listed below is followed by an explanation of its good characteristics.

Criteria 3: Project Resources: Time, Personnel, Budget

The budget is realistic for the numbers of participants, and for the compensation of consultants and the number of hours for their assistance for this project. Appropriate use of current staff's time – hiring new part time staff will ensure that existing needs will continue to be met. (Provides specific information)

Criteria 4: Impact and Evaluation

Applicant clearly understands current state of proposed activity in the museum field and centers this proposal in existing practice. The project involves broad participation of the museum community, although it would be nice to see more institutions participating. Project will help build community awareness and buy-in. Evaluation is included in all aspects and levels of the project from assessment of individual sessions to the overall evaluation of the proposal's goals and objectives. (Provides specific information)

Criteria 5: Sustainability

Applicant has committed to sustaining this project, and has the support of a national organization in helping to distribute the CD. It is not clear how the applicant might fund the cost of updating and modifying the findings after this project, nor how the applicant might produce more CDs when the first run is out. (Identifies strengths and areas for improvements)

**POOR
COMMENTS**

Listed below are sample "poor" comments. Comments that are poor are considered vague, irrelevant, insensitive, or unclear. These comments actually hinder the evaluation process rather than help it. They are not helpful to either panelists or applicants.

To avoid making poor comments, DO NOT:

- Penalize an applicant because you feel the institution doesn't need the money, remember any eligible institution may receive 21MP funds, regardless of need.
- Penalize an applicant because of missing materials. If you are missing required materials, please contact IMLS *immediately*.
- Make derogatory remarks – offer suggestions for improvement rather harsh criticism.

Questions about any information in this booklet?

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- 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 raise your question, contact IMLS.
- Offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information – your comments should concern only the information IMLS requests of applicants.

Each of the sample poor comments listed below is followed by an explanation of why it is a poor comment.

Criteria 2: Project Design

Good job – the project follows a plan. (Vague)

Criteria 3: Project Resources: Time, Personnel, Budget

The project personnel seem to be well qualified, but this institution does not have a good reputation. (Insensitive and irrelevant)

Criteria 5: Sustainability

I might question some parts of the plan, but they probably know what they are doing. (Vague, not evaluative)

V. Reviewer Material

**SIGN
REVIEWER
CONTRACT**

Sign your reviewer contract and fax to IMLS along with your completed ACH form and reviewer questionnaire.

**RETURN
MATERIALS
TO IMLS**

You must fax back the enclosed Automated Clearing House (ACH) form and reviewer contract for your services. Honoraria is paid electronically and the ACH form must be completed in its entirety, even if submitted in a prior year with the identical banking information.

In addition to your ACH form and reviewer contract, please fax us your completed reviewer evaluation.

Please fax to: 202/653-4608 (after April 26, 2005)

Should you decide to use a private carrier rather than fax your reviewer contract, ACH form, and questionnaire, please send to the following address:

IMLS
Office of Museum Services
1800 M Street, NW
9th Floor
Washington, DC 20036-5841
Attention: 21MP Reviewer Information

Please do not send this material via the USPS as we are still experiencing lengthy mail delays.

If you fax your materials then you DO NOT need to send us your originals.

- MEET THE IMLS REVIEW DEADLINE! May 18, 2005
- Don't forget to fill out your reviewer questionnaire (you may send it a few days later if you wish); it's your chance to let us know what you think about your review experience.

**KEEP
COPIES
UNTIL
SEPTEMBER 1**

Keep your applications and a copy of your review sheets until September 1, 2005 (in case of questions from IMLS staff).

- Maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review.
- After September 1, 2005, destroy the applications (you may keep optional attachments such as catalogs or brochures).

Thank You for Serving as a 21MP Field Reviewer!

Questions about any information in this booklet?

Contact the IMLS Program Office at (202) 606-8539 (before April 20, 2005) or at (202) 653-4789 (after April 26, 2005) or by e-mail at jkthomas@imls.gov between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.