



# **Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services**

## **FY2012 NANH Reviewer Handbook**

**For information, contact:**

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## Welcome to the NANH Program Review Process

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services (NANH) panel reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your professional experience in museums or cultural centers, as well as your strong understanding of all aspects of their operations as they relate to tribal or Native Hawaiian communities.

We have prepared this handbook specifically for panelists to ensure the fair and candid review of this year's applications and to provide you with the procedural and technical information you need. Please use it in tandem with the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services FY2012 Guidelines available at:

[http://www.ims.gov/applicants/native\\_american\\_native\\_hawaiian\\_museum\\_guidelines.aspx](http://www.ims.gov/applicants/native_american_native_hawaiian_museum_guidelines.aspx)

Even if you have reviewed for NANH or other IMLS programs in the past, we strongly encourage you to read through this booklet since we have made some significant changes to the review process this year. ***Be sure to read the FAQs on Writing Comments and Scoring (Appendix II) and The IMLS Online Reviewer System (Appendix III).***

## NANH Program Overview

The Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services (NANH) program enables Native American tribes and organizations that primarily serve Native Hawaiians to support their communities and audiences through strengthened museum services. Applicants can apply for projects in one of the following three categories:

- Programming
- Professional Development
- Enhancement of Museum Services

Applicants were asked to select one activity category reflecting their project goals. IMLS defined projects or programs in the widest terms possible. Although some applications may touch on all three goals, ultimately the project proposed should focus on the category indicated by the applicant.

For this program, applicants are not required to have a museum established in order to apply. While grants are intended to support activities in museums and museum-related organizations, such as cultural centers, the program also supports museum-like activities that are relevant to applicant tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations, such as public programming, collections support, and language preservation.

## Your Role

For the FY2012 NANH program, we received 37 applications on April 2, 2012. IMLS staff checked all applications for eligibility and completeness, and total of 33 applications were deemed eligible. All eligible and complete application will receive one round of thorough peer review from which funding recommendations will be determined.

You are one of eight museum professionals with substantial professional experience who will review subsets of NANH applications and then meet in Washington, DC, to discuss your comments and make funding recommendations. Your panel will review all applications over two days; you have been assigned to review a subset of 12 or 13 applications from that group.

We have designated you as the “presenter” for some of the applications you are assigned to review. This means you will take the lead during the panel deliberations by giving a brief verbal synopsis of the organization and the proposed project, your preliminary score, and your concise reasons for making these recommendations. (For more detail on how panel deliberations are conducted, please see page 14 of this handbook.)

As these applications are receiving only one round of review, we ask that you provide detailed technical reviews as well as provide overall comments on the strengths and weakness of each assigned application. During the panel meeting, you will have an opportunity to provide insight into issues pertinent to this year’s competition as well as provide recommendations on improving the grant program and its process.

We have a limited amount of time for each panel meeting, and we find that the panel discussions are most fruitful when panelists are well-prepared before they arrive. We therefore suggest that you follow the step-by-step procedures outlined in the next few pages for evaluating the applications assigned to you.

## MFA Application Review Instructions

This section of the handbook contains detailed information on how to review a Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services program application. We have arranged the information in ten steps. If you encounter any problems while undertaking your reviews, please contact me immediately during normal work days, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:30 pm Eastern Time. I will be happy to answer your questions and help troubleshoot any technology problems you might encounter.

Sandra Narva

202/653-4634 or [snarva@imls.gov](mailto:snarva@imls.gov)

### STEP 1. Verify Your Access to Applications Online

Information relating to software usage has been removed from this sample handbook.

### STEP 2. Consider Potential Conflicts of Interest

Scan your group of applications to see if there are any potential conflicts of interest. Please see the Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement included as **Appendix I** of this handbook. A conflict of interest may 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. Contact Sandra Narva at 202/653-4634 or [snarva@imls.gov](mailto:snarva@imls.gov) immediately if you suspect you may have a conflict.

### STEP 3. Remember Confidentiality

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

### STEP 4. Gather Resources

Familiarize yourself with the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services program FY2012 Guidelines, which is available at:

[http://www.imls.gov/applicants/native\\_american\\_native\\_hawaiian\\_museum\\_guidelines.aspx](http://www.imls.gov/applicants/native_american_native_hawaiian_museum_guidelines.aspx)

### STEP 5. Read Your Applications

Read your applications to develop a feel for the range of applicant responses and project activities. Refer to the review criteria detailed in FY2012 Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services FY2012 Review Criteria Quick Reference (on page 15 of this guide) as you read each application

## STEP 6. Evaluate Your Applications

Now read your applications again and take notes as you read, focusing on each of the four review criteria. You are looking for projects that are strongest in these three areas:

- **Statement of Need**
- **Impact**
- **Project Design**
- **Project Resources: Personnel, Time, Budget**

Remember that you are evaluating each application individually and not simply comparing them against one another.

**HINT:** We strongly recommend that you draft your comments using Microsoft Word®, and then copy and paste them into the IMLS Online Reviewer System. The Online Review System can crash from time to time, but if you have your work in a word processing program, you will have a convenient backup. Please be aware that there is a 2000-character limit in each of your comment boxes. You may wish to keep that in mind as you write.

The following are characteristics of good reviewing practices, so DO:

- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Review the application on its own merits, not on extraneous information you may have about an organization or the people involved in the project.
- Call IMLS if you question the accuracy of any information in the application or the integrity of the applicant.
- Consider a project's strengths *and* weaknesses. Acknowledge and compliment strengths, and offer practical suggestions for improving weaknesses.
- Be thoughtful in your analysis of the project.
- Make your comments concise, understandable, and specific to the individual applicant.
- Be sure your comments correlate with the number scores you provide.

***Remember, both successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to improve their operations and their future submissions.***

To avoid making poor comments, DO NOT:

- Make derogatory remarks or level harsh criticism.
- Penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money. (Any eligible institution may receive funds, regardless of need.)
- Question an applicant's honesty or integrity in your review.
- Merely summarize or paraphrase the applicant's own words in your comments.
- Make vague or overly general statements.
- Offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information.

## 7. Assign Scores

As a peer reviewer, you will provide only ONE overall score for each application. Use a scale of 1-5, with 1 = lowest and 5 = highest, according to the following definitions:

### NANH Panel Score Definitions

- 5 – Excellent:** The proposal is outstanding, and the project completely fulfills the goals of the MFA program.
- 4 – Very Good:** The proposal is solid, and the project is well-developed and highly recommended for funding.
- 3 – Good:** The proposal is adequate, but probably falls short in a number of ways and could be strengthened. The project would likely be successful and is worthy of funding but it is not a high priority.
- 2 – Some Merit:** Although the proposal has worth, it is flawed in one or more ways and requires major reworking. The project is not likely to be successful and should not be recommended for funding. It might be a project that is worthy of a resubmission with improvements.
- 1 – Do Not Fund:** The proposal would not be successful and is not recommended for funding or resubmission in this form.

Be sure to use only whole numbers—not fractions, decimals, zeroes, and not more than one number. Also, use the full range of scores to help determine which applications best meet the evaluation criteria.

Please note that scores of **3** (Good), **4** (Very Good), and **5** (Excellent) all represent “fundable” projects. What varies between and among proposals might be the degree of alignment with the **purpose** of the NANH grant program, some aspect of its potential for **success**, or the level of institutional and community **impact**. These are the areas we ask you to consider in crafting your evaluations, and they are the criteria we will ask you to emphasize during the panel meeting.

The following matters are **NOT** criteria we want you to take into consideration: indirect cost rates, the financial need of an institution, the national importance of a collection, and any information outside the application that relates to the museum, its staff, people served, or its history.

### STEP 8. Review Your Work

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 IMLS Online Reviewer System. Adjust your scores, if necessary, to more accurately reflect your written evaluation. Scores should support comments, and comments should justify scores.

Be sure that for each application, you have provided:

- written comments for each of the four evaluation sections;
- a single score from 1-5 for the entire application; and

- additional comments and observations under Application Overview

### **STEP 9. Submit Your Reviews**

Information relating to software usage has been removed from this sample handbook.

### **STEP 10. Next Steps**

Review your assigned applications and review comments again to prepare for the panel meeting in Washington, DC.

## **Your Role During Panel Deliberations**

### **At the Meeting**

In preparation for the panel meeting, be sure you will be ready to act as “presenter” for the 4-5 specific applications for which you have been assigned this role (as identified in “My Application List” sent to you via e-mail at the beginning of the review period), and to discuss and comment on all 12-13 applications you have read and reviewed.

We will preload electronic copies of all applications slated for discussion onto a PC laptop for your use at the meeting. You will also be able to use the laptop to record any changes to your final scores and/or comments. You are welcome, of course, to bring your own copies with notes, either paper or electronic. If you want to bring your own electronic files, we recommend using a flash drive or a CD for easy transfer to an IMLS laptop. Reviewers have told us that using one laptop at a time is preferable to two.

At the panel meeting, you will share your thoughts and recommendations with the full panel. IMLS staff will identify the application to be discussed, and the panelist assigned to “present” the application will give a brief verbal synopsis of the organization and the proposed project, his or her preliminary score (using the 1-5 scale), and concise reasons to support these recommendations. Each summation should be about three minutes in length. Then, the two other assigned readers will share their comments and scores for the proposal. Discussion will then be opened to the entire panel. Following discussion, each reader will be given an opportunity to assign a final score and make any additional comments for the applicant if necessary.

### **Issues Discussion**

During the panel meeting, we will set aside time for an issues discussion, when you will be able to provide us with feedback on the NANH grant program, the application materials, and the review and panel process. Time permitting, we will also have a wide-ranging discussion of what challenges, trends, and opportunities you see today in today’s museum community.

### **After the Meeting**

After the panel review process is complete, IMLS staff will review your final recommendations with the IMLS Director, who will determine, based on the funds available, which applications to fund.

## **Our Thanks!**

We hope it is clear that your participation as panel reviewer is a pivotal component of the IMLS peer review process. We thank you for your gifts of time and expertise and this very important contribution to the museum community. We wish you the best of luck in working through your reviews, as well as safe travels. We look forward to welcoming you to Washington in July.



## Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services FY2012 Panel Review Criteria Quick Reference

Your role as a panel reviewer is to evaluate how well proposals meet the goals of the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum (NANH) services program. As you evaluate each application's strengths and weaknesses, you should look for the following information in narrative responses:

<p><b>1. STATEMENT OF NEED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that the applicant has performed a formal or informal assessment of community needs</li> <li>• Evidence that the project and its goals were developed as the best solution to address those needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. IMPACT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that the project will create specific changes and benefits for the applicant, museum, and/or the community served</li> <li>• Evidence that the applicant has plans to sustain those changes and benefits beyond the grant period</li> <li>• Evidence that the evaluation plan ties directly to the project goals and is appropriate in determining project impact</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. PROJECT DESIGN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that the project proposes efficient, effective, and reasonable approaches to accomplish its clear goals and objectives</li> <li>• Extent to which the project allows for mid-course correction of project activities</li> <li>• Evidence this project will be promoted to the intended audience</li> <li>• If the project includes digitization, evidence that appropriate procedures will be followed</li> <li>• If the project includes an exhibition, evidence that the content, objects, and other applicable elements and resources have been identified</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. PROJECT RESOURCES: TIME, PERSONNEL, BUDGET</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Evidence of sound financial management, coupled with an appropriate and cost efficient budget</li> <li>• Evidence that the project personnel demonstrate appropriate experience and expertise and will commit adequate time to accomplish project activities</li> <li>• Evidence that the applicant is capable of successfully completing the project and activities</li> </ul>

### Application Overview

Once you have completed comments on Criteria 1 through 4, you may use the Additional Comments box to share your **overall** impression of the application and any general comments that do not fall into one of the above categories.

Provide ONE overall score for the entire application using the scale of **1** through **5**. Please use the full range of scores to evaluate applications.

### Rating Scale

**5** Excellent    **4** Very good    **3** Good/adequate    **2** Some merit    **1** Do not fund

## 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 Sandra Narva, Senior Program Officer, at [snarva@imls.gov](mailto:snarva@imls.gov) or 202/653-4634.

**Appendices II and III have been  
removed from this sample handbook**