



Laura Bush  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Program

# 2013 Technical Field Reviewer Handbook

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# THE LAURA BUSH 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LIBRARIAN PROGRAM GRANTS REVIEW PROCESS

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Grant technical 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 *Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Grant Application and Guidelines (LB21 Guidelines)*.

## THE LB21 PROGRAM

The Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Grant program (LB21) provides Federal grants through an annual, competitive process. In the LB21 program:

- Applications are evaluated by peers;
- Evaluations are based on the application's strength in proving that the applicant:
  - Demonstrates impact as defined in the *LB21 Guidelines*;
  - Meets applicable evaluation criteria as outlined in the *LB21 Guidelines*;
  - Addresses one of the categories for this funding cycle as explained in the *LB21 Guidelines*; and
  - Aligns with IMLS strategic goals.

## THE LB21 PROCESS

1. Applicants review the *Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Grant Application and Guidelines* and submit proposals to IMLS.
2. IMLS receives the grant applications, checks them for eligibility and completeness.
3. IMLS identifies a pool of technical field reviewers and assigns at least three appropriately qualified professionals to evaluate each application.
4. Technical field reviewers evaluate the applications and submit comments using the IMLS Online Reviewer System.
5. If necessary, IMLS will host a conference call to discuss those proposals that received significant variance in reviewer evaluations.
6. IMLS processes technical field reviewer comments and scores, and ranks the applications. The ranking will be used to determine which applications are sent to the overview panel.
7. Overview panelists meet in person to consider recommended proposals and make funding recommendations.
8. IMLS Director makes final funding decisions.

9. IMLS staff notifies successful applicants.
10. IMLS provides feedback to all applicants.

## **How Your Reviews Are Used**

Your comments and scores as a technical field reviewer are an important part of this process. They will provide the basis for the overview panel review, directing panelists to the strengths and weaknesses of an application, and helping both panelists and IMLS staff determine which proposals are both highly innovative and offer broad potential impact.

If a panel-reviewed application is not funded, your review comments and panel comments assist the applicant in revising their application for future submission. Applicants whose proposals are not ranked highly enough for panel review will only receive your technical field review comments. Unsuccessful applicants often use reviewer comments to improve or revise their applications for resubmission.

## **APPLICATION REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS**

### **I. FIRST STEPS**

IMLS staff will send all 2013 LB21 technical field reviewers instructions on how to download the proposals assigned to you using the IMLS Applications Online System. Once you have downloaded the proposals assigned to you, you may begin using the IMLS Online Reviewer System to evaluate each assigned proposal. Instructions for accessing the Online Reviewer System are included later in this guide.

To aid you in your evaluations, IMLS makes available not only this *Technical Field Reviewer Handbook*, but also *Reviewer 101*, a narrated web presentation designed primarily for technical field reviewers. *Reviewer 101* covers: 1) Overview; 2) Ethics; 3) Process; 4) Evaluation; 5) Comments to Applicants; and 6) Online Reviewer System. It is on the IMLS Website under “Reviewer Resources” (<http://www.imls.gov/reviewers/resources.aspx>).

Please view Reviewer 101 to familiarize yourself with the IMLS review process. If you have any questions afterward or require technical support, contact IMLS program staff. After you have submitted your comments and scores in the Online Reviewer System and if there are wide variations in reviewers’ scoring, then IMLS staff may contact you to schedule a conference call to discuss the affected applications.

## **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.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Read through your list of applications to see if there are any potential conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest would include either you or a member of your immediate family having a financial interest in whether a proposal is funded, or some other reason you feel would prevent you from providing an objective review. If there is a potential conflict, contact IMLS immediately.

When you log in to the IMLS Online Reviewer System, you will be asked to verify that you have no known conflict of interest for the proposals assigned to you. Once you have reviewed an application, you should *never* represent the applicant in dealings with the IMLS or other Federal agencies in regard to this grant application or award.

## **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. There are page limits on certain sections (10 pages for Narrative, 2 pages for each resume) and IMLS truncates submissions that run longer. ***If any application appears to be incomplete beyond these circumstances, contact IMLS immediately.***

## **II. THE ONLINE REVIEWER SYSTEM**

All reviewers will use the Online Reviewer System to submit their comments and scores. Listed below are the general steps for using the Online Reviewer System. *Please note that this is a legacy system that has a number of flaws. We highly recommend that you read these steps before you start.*

Begin by writing comments and scores for proposals in a word processing document for later

transfer to the Online Reviewer System. This document will be an invaluable resource in case of system failure. When you have completed assigning scores and giving comments for each application assigned to you, you will submit the entire review to IMLS. It is essential to the review calendar that you complete and submit all reviews by the deadline.

### Accessing the Online Reviewer System

- Go to <https://e-services.imls.gov/grantapps/reviewers.aspx> and enter the login information provided by IMLS program staff.
- Once you have logged in, an **E-Review** Security screen will appear. Read and click **OK**.
- After you have created a new password your panel assignment will appear. To access the list of applications, click **VIEW**.

INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

## Online Reviewer System

[ LOGIN | REVIEW GROUPS ]

Reviewer Login  
Review Groups  
My Online Account  
Log Off

Review Group Code	No. of Applications	Review Status	VIEW	PRINT
RG-RE-02-2012-FR-001	5	Incomplete	VIEW	PRINT

Welcome to IMLS review online. Your current review panel assignment is listed above. You will need to complete a review for each application you have been assigned. In order for a review to be considered complete, you will need to give a score and a comment to each review criteria for every application.

To begin, click on the view button, and you will see a list of all the applications you have been assigned to review with their identifying numbers and their completion status. When you have completed **all** of the application reviews you will submit the entire set to IMLS. Then the status for you panel assignment will change from incomplete to submitted.

Thank you for choosing to use the IMLS online review.

- 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, you may 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, please contact your assigned IMLS Program Officer.

[ LOGIN | REVIEW GROUPS | REVIEWER APPLICATIONS ]

**Applications List**

**Conflict Of Interests Statement**

IMLS Online Reviewer process requires each reviewer to submit a conflict of interests statement prior to reviewing the applications. The conflict of interests statement will be submitted only once.

Please review the details of each application and determine if there are any conflicts of interests. Click on the "Details" button view each application.

If there are no conflicts of interests, leave all check boxes unchecked and 'Conflict Comments' text box blank. The reviewer can return to the individual reviews without going through this statement again.

If there are conflicts of interest for any of the applications, please contact the IMLS staff to discuss your conflict. When the conflict has been resolved, you may return to this website to continue your review. If you will report a conflict of interests, an email will be sent to the appropriate program officer to take further action.

Review Group: RG-RE-02-2012-FR-001

Log Number	Application Title	Institution Name	Application Review Status	Conflicts		
RE-02-12-0001			Complete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Details</a>	<a href="#">PRINT</a>
RE-02-12-0002			Complete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Details</a>	<a href="#">PRINT</a>
RE-02-12-0003			Complete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Details</a>	<a href="#">PRINT</a>
RE-02-12-0005			Complete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Details</a>	<a href="#">PRINT</a>
RE-02-12-0007			Complete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Details</a>	<a href="#">PRINT</a>

Conflict Comments:  255 Char.

[SUBMIT CONFLICT OF INTERESTS STATEMENT](#)

- Now you are ready to begin. You may click **REVIEW** beside any application to begin.

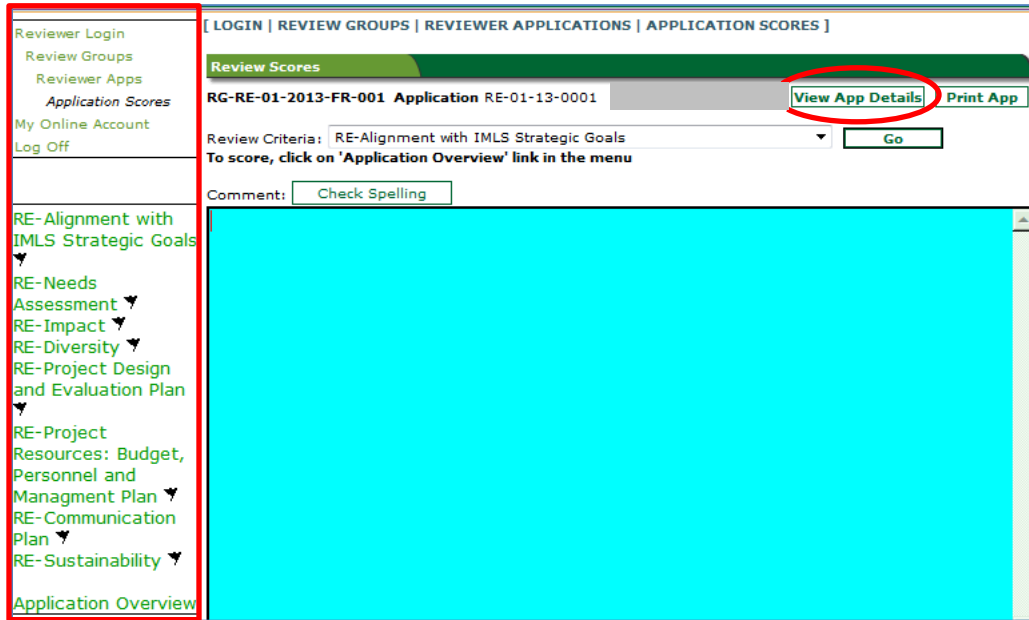
**Applications List**

Review Group: RG-RE-02-2012-FR-001

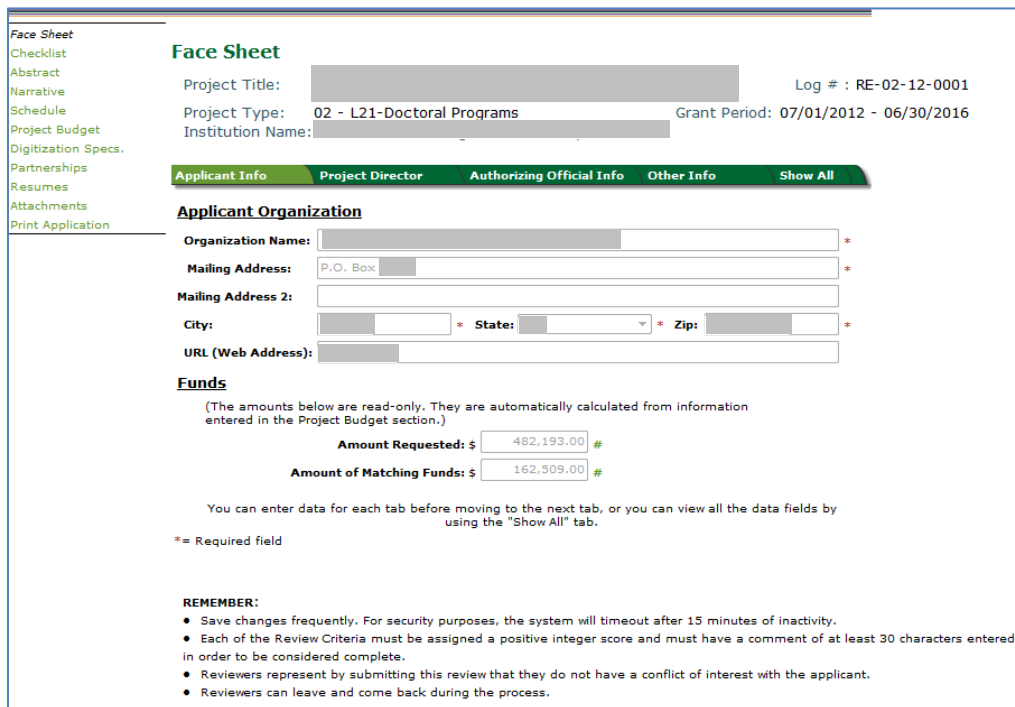
Log Number	Application Title	Institution Name	Application Review Status		
RE-02-12-0001			Complete	<a href="#">REVIEW</a>	<a href="#">PRINT</a>
RE-02-12-0002			Complete	<a href="#">REVIEW</a>	<a href="#">PRINT</a>
RE-02-12-0003			Complete	<a href="#">REVIEW</a>	<a href="#">PRINT</a>
RE-02-12-0005			Complete	<a href="#">REVIEW</a>	<a href="#">PRINT</a>
RE-02-12-0007			Complete	<a href="#">REVIEW</a>	<a href="#">PRINT</a>

[I AM READY TO SUBMIT THIS REVIEW TO IMLS](#)

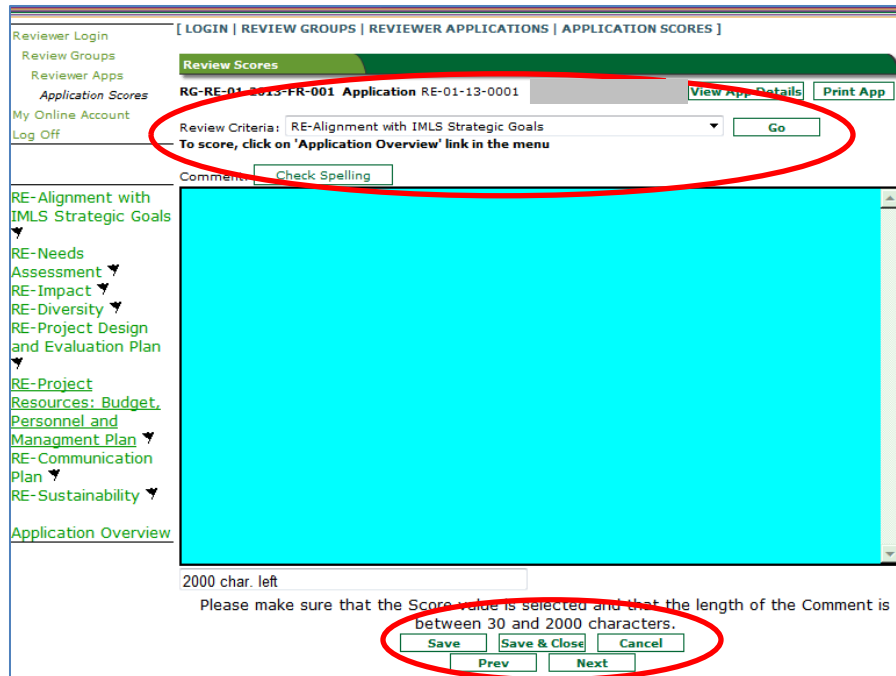
- The navigation bar appears on the left of your screen. Click on the items listed to go to a specific place in the application. Click on View App Details to display the Face Sheet.



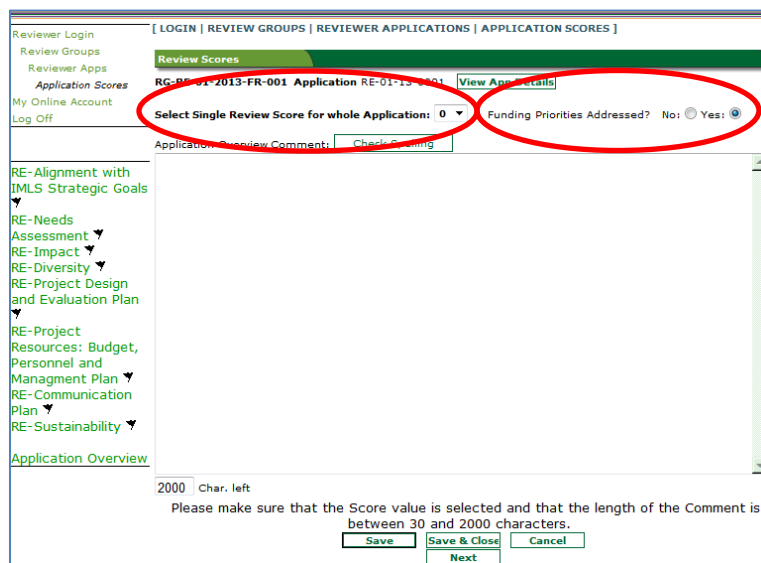
- The Face Sheet provides basic information about the applicant.



- Click on the evaluation criteria on the left of the screen to begin entering your comments. Use the drop-down menus for Review Criteria and the text box for comments as you move through the sections of each proposal, saving your work as you proceed and clicking Next to move to the next section.



- When you have completed submitting your comments for all of the review criteria, select an overall score from 1 to 5 (see page 13 for more information on scoring). Check Yes or No to answer Funding Priorities Addressed? Funding priorities are synonymous with the IMLS Strategic Goals. In the Application Overview section, write general comments about the proposal.





- Once you have completed an application review you must 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.
- After evaluating all of your assigned proposals, click on I Am Ready to Submit.

Applications List			
Review Group: RG-RE-02-2012-FR-001			
Log Number	Application Title	Institution Name	Application Review Status
RE-02-12-0001			Incomplete <input type="button" value="REVIEW"/> <input type="button" value="PRINT"/>
RE-02-12-0002			Incomplete <input type="button" value="REVIEW"/> <input type="button" value="PRINT"/>
RE-02-12-0003			Incomplete <input type="button" value="REVIEW"/> <input type="button" value="PRINT"/>
RE-02-12-0005			Incomplete <input type="button" value="REVIEW"/> <input type="button" value="PRINT"/>
RE-02-12-0007			Incomplete <input type="button" value="REVIEW"/> <input type="button" value="PRINT"/>

- 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.

## 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.

### **What web browser should I use?**

Since this was created several years ago by a Microsoft-based web developer, Internet Explorer is the only reliable web browser. Unfortunately, Mac users and those using Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Camino, and Opera will most likely **not** be able work with our review system. Also we have heard that Microsoft Vista does not work well either.

Our recommendation is to use Internet Explorer 9.0 or later. *We suggest that you write and save your comments in a word processing program, then once you get into Internet Explorer and the*

*IMLS reviewer system you can cut and paste your remarks in the proper place.*

**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.

**Keeping Copies of Your Reviews and Assigned Proposals**

Keep your applications and a copy of your reviews until April 30, 2013 (in case of questions from IMLS staff).

- Maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review.
- After April 30, 2013, destroy or delete all copies of these documents in your possession.

**III. EVALUATING APPLICATIONS**

The IMLS Online Reviewer System will require you to provide summary evaluative comments for each of the review criteria. Please consider the following questions when writing comments.

*Alignment with IMLS Strategic Goals*

- Does the proposal align with one of the IMLS strategic goals?
  1. Learning
  2. Community
  3. Content
  4. Access
  5. Model Public Agency

*Needs Assessment*

- Does the literature review include relevant research and/or projects?
- Does the needs assessment clearly articulate the project audience and its needs?
- Do project activities and goals directly address the needs of the identified audience?
- Is the rationale for this research fully explained?

### *Impact*

- Does the project increase the number of qualified professionals for employment as librarians?
- Does it build greater skills and abilities in the library and archives workforce?
- Will it contribute to results or products that benefit multiple institutions and diverse constituencies?
- Will project outcomes meet library service needs not only in the communities served but also be generalizable to libraries of similar size and type?
- Will this project transform practice? Innovative approaches will be given high consideration.

### *Diversity*

- Does the proposal identify the diversity of communities served?
- Does it address the library service needs of those communities, particularly the needs of traditionally underserved groups and/or communities?

### *Project Design and Evaluation Plan*

- Are the methodology and design appropriate to the scope of the project?
- Does the proposal clearly articulate research questions and adequately address timeline & personnel?
- Does it include details of sampling logic (size, scope), data collection and analysis methodologies?
- Does the evaluation plan explain how the results are likely to be valid, reliable or generalizable?
- Does the evaluation plan include a description of how the study results will be assessed?

### *Project Resources: Budget, Personnel and Management Plan*

- Are resources appropriate to meet the project goals?
- Do personnel have appropriate experience and will they commit adequate time to the project?
- If the project includes a partnership, is there evidence that all partners are active contributors to and beneficiaries of the partnership activities?

### *Communication Plan*

- Will results, products, models, findings, processes, and benefits of this project be communicated effectively to the library field and to other professional organizations and communities?
- Do the communities described in the Needs Assessment section benefit?

*Note: Collaborative Planning Grants do not require a Communication plan.*

### *Sustainability Plan*

- Do the project's benefits continue beyond the grant period?
- For projects involving distance education, do project plans address issues of copyright and use restriction on the course and course content during and after the grant period?
- Are there plans for preservation and maintenance of course and course content during and after the expiration of the grant period?

*Note: Collaborative Planning and National Forum Planning Grants do not require Sustainability Plans.*

### *IMLS 2012-2016 Strategic Goals*

You should also assess how well the proposal aligns with the IMLS 2012-2016 strategic goals as detailed in *Creating a Nation of Learners*, available at [www.imls.gov/plan](http://www.imls.gov/plan). The five strategic goals are:

1. IMLS places the learner at the center and supports engaging experiences in libraries and museums that prepare people to be full participants in their local communities and our global society.
2. IMLS promotes museums and libraries as strong community anchors that enhance civic engagement, cultural opportunities, and economic vitality.
3. IMLS supports exemplary stewardship of museum and library collections and promotes the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage.
4. IMLS advises the President and Congress on plans, policies, and activities that sustain and increase public access to information and ideas.
5. IMLS achieves excellence in public management and performs as a model organization through strategic alignment of IMLS resources and prioritization of programmatic activities, maximizing value for the American public.

### **Scoring Each Application**

After you have finished writing evaluative comments for each section of the proposal, use the section named "Additional Comments" to provide an overall numeric score and to add feedback not tied to a specific evaluation criterion. Please make sure numeric scores are supported by the corresponding evaluative comments. The following rating scale should be used for scoring.

Note: As you assign a numeric score to each proposal:

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

*Excellent (5)* – The applicant’s response provides **excellent** support for each of the evaluation criteria through the proposed activities. It strongly demonstrates potential to elevate or provide strategic impact to museum, archival, and library practice within the context of national strategic initiatives. These applications fulfill to the fullest extent the goals of the LB21 program. Use only for the highest quality applications.

*Very Good (4)* – The applicant’s response provides **very good** support for each of the evaluation criteria through the proposed activities. Some minor flaws exist that are easily fixed. Strategic impact is present, but not exemplary. Use for very strong applications when minor requested changes easily can be made within one week.

*Good (3)* - The applicant’s response provides **good/adequate** support for each of the evaluation criteria. Limited strategic impact and/ or innovation presented. Projects with a “good” rating have a good idea but with flaws that may or not may not need some revising before being funded in this year. Use for applications when more significant requested changes can be made in one week.

*Some Merit (2)* - The applicant’s response provides inadequate support for the proposed activities, however the application shows **some merit** and should be reworked and resubmitted, taking into consideration recommendations and feedback from the review panel. A rating of “some merit” indicates the submission is not ready to receive funding, but is based on good ideas or addresses important issues. Use for projects that can be revised and resubmitted to LB21 by this applicant next year.

*Do Not Fund (1)* - The applicant’s responses provide insufficient information for evaluation; projects have major flaws that render them unfundable without major revision or have serious conceptual flaws. The idea itself is not necessarily bad or the issues raised not important, but the application is not fundable by IMLS in the Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Grant program. It may be fundable in another IMLS grant category. Use for projects that you do not want to see brought back to LB21 by this applicant.

## **QUALITIES OF A GOOD PROPOSAL**

A good LB21 proposal should:

- Demonstrate impact as defined in the *Guidelines*
- Successfully address each criterion
- Address goals for the appropriate category (Refer to the *Guidelines*.)
- Align with the IMLS strategic goals

## **READ APPLICATIONS**

Read your applications to develop a feel for the range of responses. Take notes as you read. Read each application again.

## **WRITE COMMENTS**

Reread the evaluation criteria. Draft comments that reflect your judgment for each of the evaluation criteria. Write them in a word processor and then copy and paste into the online review system.

Submit final scores for assigned applications no later than the deadline. Please remember to print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files.

If you have any questions about reviewing, please contact Mary Alice Ball at (202) 653-4730 or Traci Stanley at (202) 653-4689.

## **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
- 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 identifies areas for improvement

*Remember:* Successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to improve their awards or future applications!

## **POOR COMMENTS**

Comments that are considered poor are vague, irrelevant, insensitive, or unclear. These comments actually hinder the evaluation process rather than help it.

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 apply for and receive LB21 funds, regardless of need.
- Penalize an applicant because of missing materials, unless you have determined that the materials are missing from the original application. If you are missing *required* materials, contact IMLS immediately.
- Make derogatory remarks—offer suggestions for improvement rather than harsh criticism.

Question an applicant's honesty or integrity. You may question the accuracy of information provided by the applicant; if you are unsure how to phrase your concerns, contact IMLS.