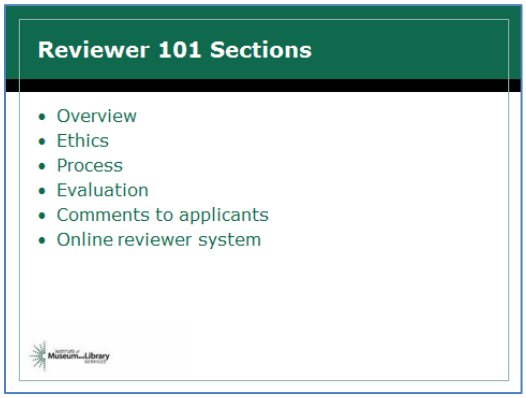
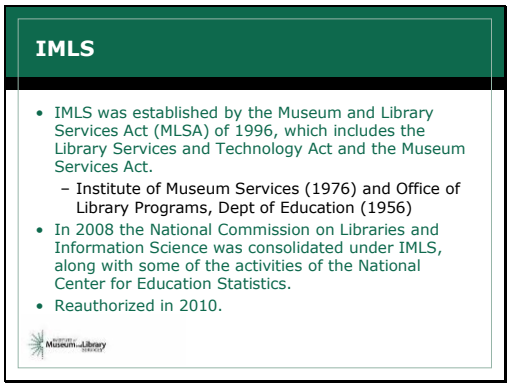
Welcome to Reviewer 101 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. This web presentation is designed to help grant reviewers for the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program prepare to serve on a review panel.

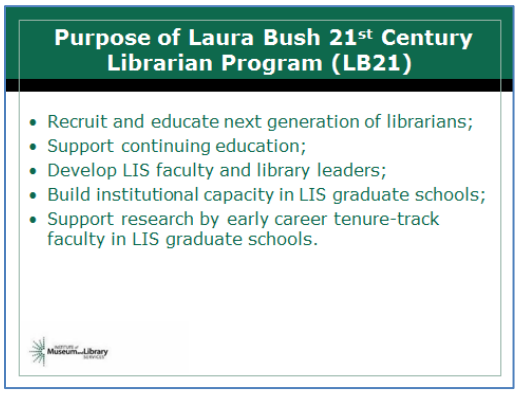


Reviewer 101 is made up of six sections, this overview followed by ones on ethics, process, evaluation, comments to applicants, and the online reviewer system.

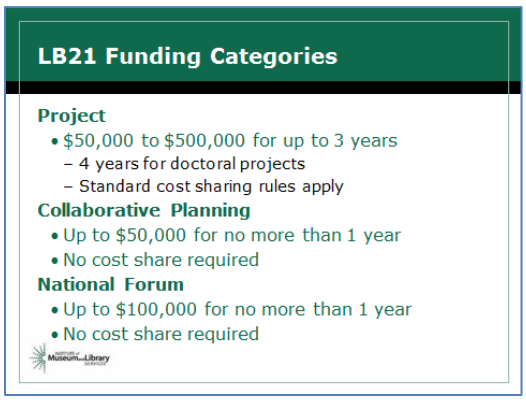


Before you serve on an IMLS review panel it may be helpful to have some background about the agency. IMLS was established by the Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA) of 1996, which includes the Library Services and Technology Act and the Museum Services Act. It incorporated the Institute of Museum Services, founded in 1976 and the Office of Library Programs in the Department of Education, created in 1956. Then in 2008 the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science was consolidated under IMLS, along with some of the activities of the National Center for Education Statistics. IMLS was reauthorized in 2010.

IMLS's mission is to serve as the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums; to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas; and to help build the capacity of libraries and museums through grant-making, convenings, research and publications.



The Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (commonly referred to as LB21) has seven primary purposes: to recruit and educate the next generation of librarians; to support continuing education; to develop LIS faculty and library leaders; to build institutional capacity in LIS graduate schools; and to support research by early career tenure-track faculty in LIS graduate schools.



The three LB21 Funding Categories are Project, Collaborative Planning, and National Forum. The project category is the one most applicants apply under. Awards range from $50,000 to $500,000 for up to 3 years, or 4 years for doctoral projects. Standard cost sharing rules apply to project category grants. Collaborative Planning grants may receive up to $50,000 for no more than 1 year and no cost share is required. National Forum grants are up to $100,000 for no more than 1 year, and, again, no cost share is required.

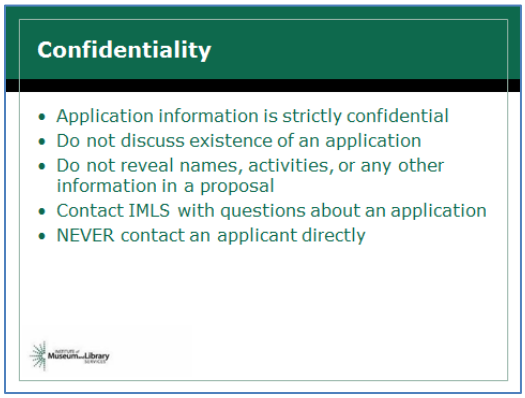
LB21 has five Project Categories: Master's Programs; Doctoral Programs; Programs to Build Institutional Capacity; Research: Early Career Development; and Continuing Education.

The program has a competitive review process with applications being evaluated by peers. Evaluations are based on the application's strength in proving that the applicant: meets the evaluation criteria in the *Guidelines*; and addresses one of the project categories. Roughly one-third of applications are funded. Reviewer evaluations are a critical part of the process. You were selected because of your expertise. We appreciate your willingness to serve!

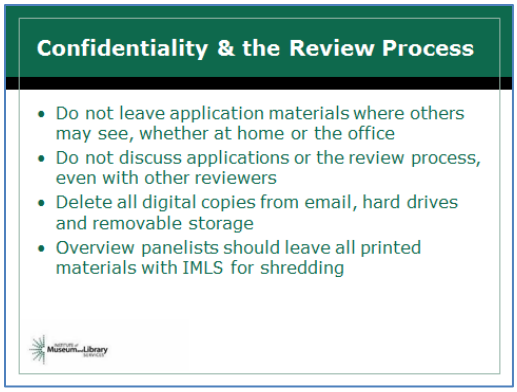
This slide shows a screen shot of the IMLS Web site page for grant reviewers and gives the URL below. The Grant Reviewer tab is the second one from the left when you click on it the second option in the left column shows the link for Reviewer Resources.

Reviewer 101: section two, Ethics.

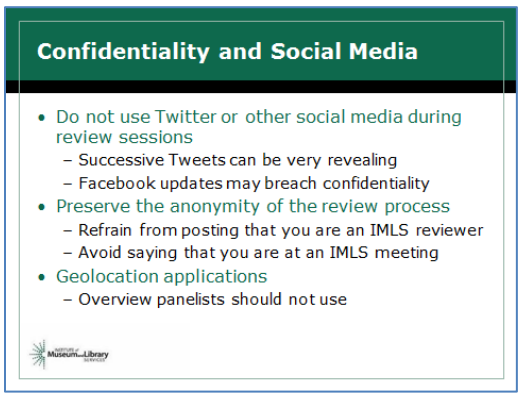
The integrity of the review process at IMLS is sacrosanct. Applicants make a huge commitment of time in preparing their grant proposals, often revealing intellectual property that is central to their professional careers. It is critical that the review process protect their ideas. Fair and candid reviews are essential with panelists sharing viewpoints off the record. Reviewers need to demonstrate an openness to others' ideas. Ultimately, the expert advice offered through the peer review process is valuable to all applicants.



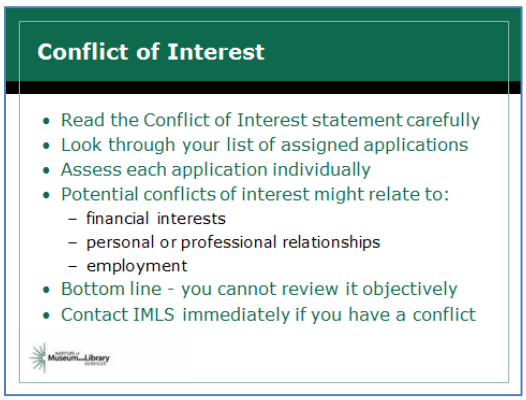
Application information is strictly confidential. Panelists should not discuss the existence of an application, let alone reveal names, activities, or any other information in a proposal. If you have questions about an application please contact IMLS. NEVER contact an applicant directly.



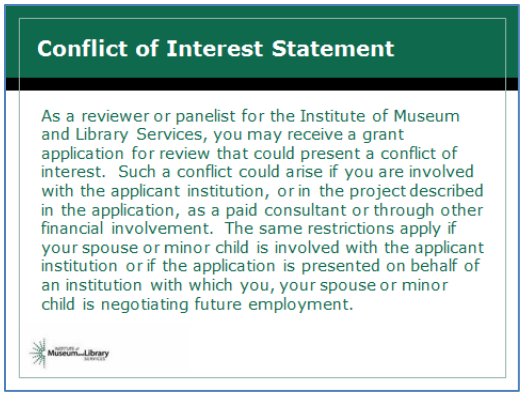
Confidentiality is important to remember at all stages of the review process. Do not leave application materials where others may see them, whether at home or the office. Do not discuss applications or the review process, even with other reviewers. Delete all digital copies from your email, hard drives and removable storage. Overview panelist should leave all printed materials with IMLS for shredding.



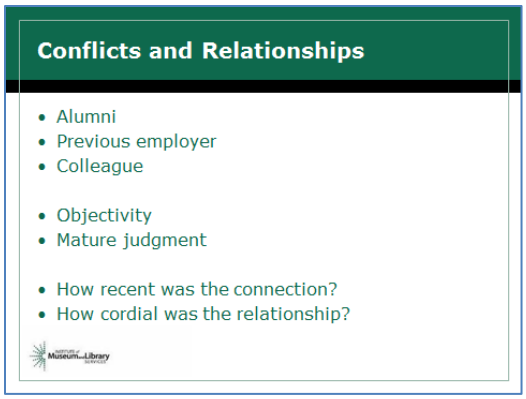
Confidentiality can be especially challenging at a time when many reviewers regularly use social media. Please do not use Twitter or other social media during review sessions. When viewed together successive Tweets can be very revealing, just as Facebook updates may breach confidentiality. You can preserve the anonymity of the review process by refraining from posting that you are an IMLS reviewer; and avoiding saying that you are at an IMLS meeting. Also remember that overview panelists should not use geolocation applications such as Foursquare.



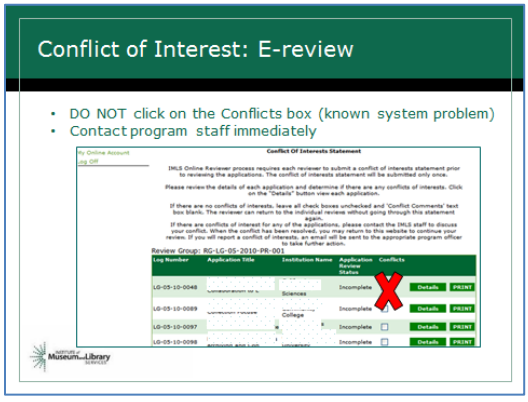
Please take the time to read the Conflict of Interest statement carefully. Then look through your list of assigned applications, assessing each application individually. Potential conflicts of interest might relate to: financial interests; personal or professional relationships; or employment. The bottom line in judging whether a conflict of interest exists is if you don't think you can review an application objectively. Please contact IMLS immediately if you have a conflict.



The following is the Conflict of Interest statement: As a reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, 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 future employment.

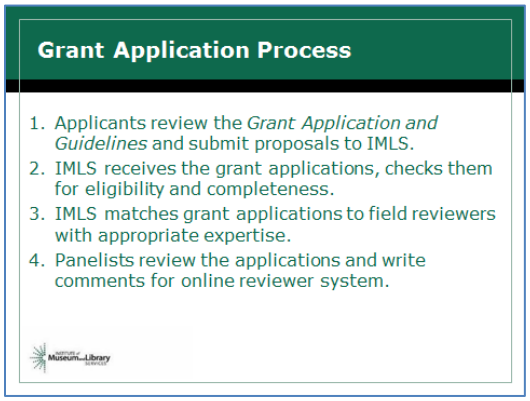


We are often asked about potential conflicts of interest and personal relationships. This may be because a reviewer attended or was employed by an applicant institution. Or it may be because a reviewer has or had a relationship with a colleague involved with an application, whether as a principal investigator or a project staff member. Reviewers are expected to use objectivity and mature judgment. Ask yourselves how recent was the connection and how cordial was the relationship?



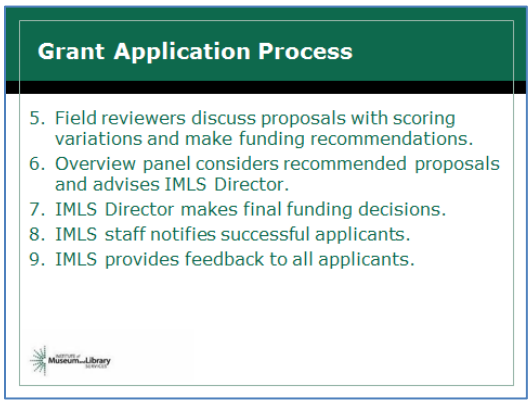
If you have a conflict of interest DO NOT put a check in the Conflicts dialog box in the IMLS Online Reviewer System. This will cause a known system problem. Instead contact program staff immediately.

Reviewer 101: section three, Process.

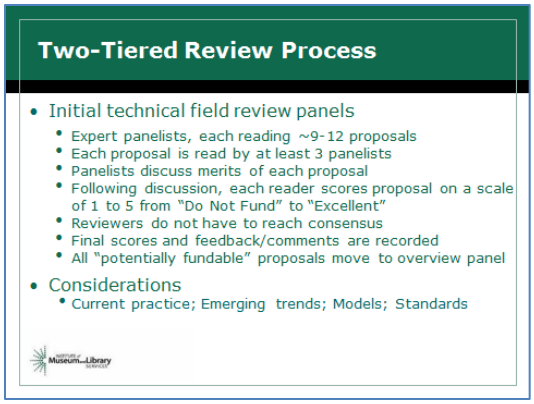


The grant application process consists of nine basic steps:

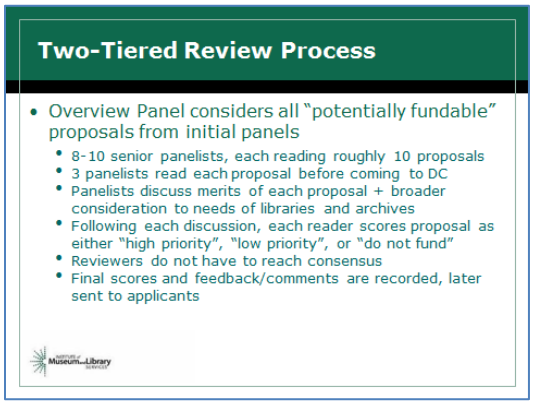
1. Applicants review the *Grant Application and Guidelines* and submit proposals to IMLS.
2. IMLS receives the grant applications, checks them for eligibility and completeness.
3. IMLS matches grant applications to field reviewers with appropriate expertise.
4. Panelists review the applications and write comments for the online reviewer system.



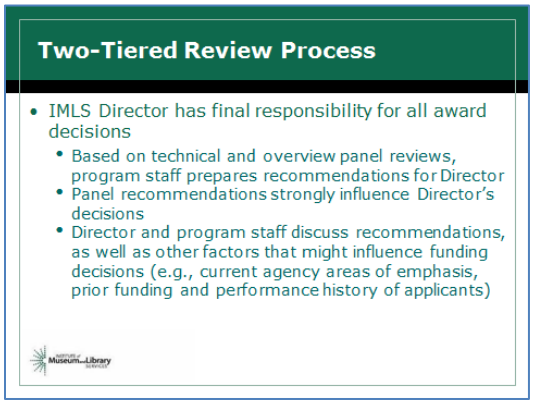
5. Field reviewers discuss proposals with scoring variations and make funding recommendations.
6. Overview panel considers recommended proposals and advises the IMLS Director.
7. IMLS Director makes final funding decisions.
8. IMLS staff notifies successful applicants.
9. IMLS provides feedback to all applicants.



The LB21 program uses a two-tiered review process that begins with initial technical field review panels of expert panelists, each reading ~9-12 proposals. Each proposal is read by at least 3 panelists. Panelists then discuss the merits of each proposal and following discussion, each reader scores a proposal on a scale of 1 to 5 from “Do Not Fund” to “Excellent.” Reviewers do not have to reach consensus. Final scores and feedback or comments are recorded, and all “potentially fundable” proposals move to the overview panel. Considerations are: current practice, emerging trends, models, and standards.

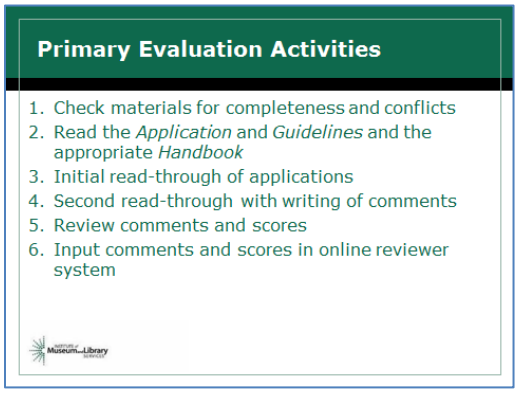


The overview panel considers all “potentially fundable” proposals from the initial, technical review panels. 8-10 senior panelists each read roughly 10 proposals. 3 panelists read each proposal before coming to DC and during the panel meeting discuss the merits of each proposal while giving a broader consideration to the needs of libraries and archives. Following each discussion, each reader scores a proposal as either “high priority”, “low priority”, or “do not fund.” Again, reviewers do not have to reach consensus. Final scores and feedback or comments are recorded, and later sent to applicants.



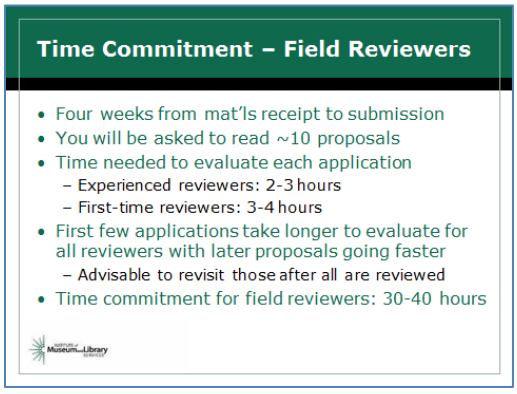
The IMLS Director has final responsibility for all award decisions. Based on technical and overview panel reviews, program staff prepares recommendations for the Director. Panel recommendations strongly influence the Director’s decisions. The Director and program staff discuss recommendations, as well as other factors that might influence funding decisions (for example, current agency areas of emphasis, prior funding and performance history of applicants).

Reviewer 101: section four, Evaluation.

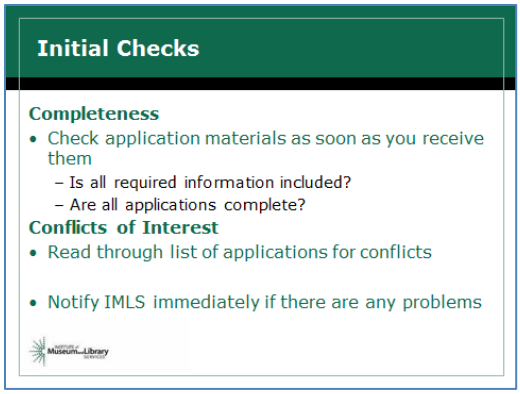


The primary activities involved in evaluating submissions are:

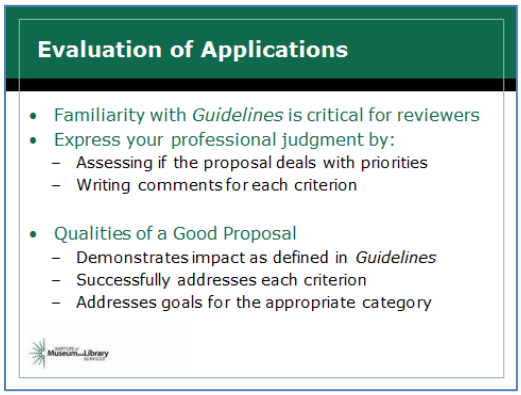
1. Checking materials for completeness and conflicts
2. Reading the *Application* and *Guidelines* and the appropriate *Handbook*
3. An initial read-through of all assigned applications
4. A second read-through with writing of comments
5. Reviewing comments and scores
6. Inputting comments and scores in the online reviewer system



It's important to understand the time commitment expected of IMLS reviewers. From the time you receive the application materials to submission of your scores and comments is only four weeks. You will be asked to read approximately 10 proposals. In terms of the time needed to evaluate each application, IMLS estimates that experienced reviewers will need 2 to 3 hours and first-time reviewers, 3 to 4. The first few applications typically take longer to evaluate for all reviewers with later proposals going faster. It's advisable to revisit those earlier applications after everything has been reviewed. The overall time commitment for field reviewers is in the range of 30 to 40 hours.

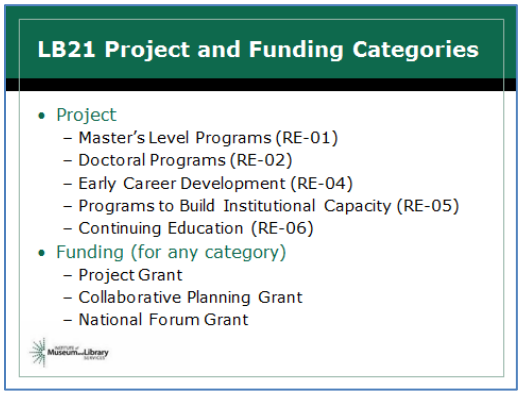


There are two initial checks you need to do as soon as you receive your application materials: Completeness and Conflicts of Interest. Check the application materials to make sure that all the required information is included and that all the applications are complete. Read through the list of applications to verify that there are no conflicts of interest. Notify IMLS immediately if there are any problems.

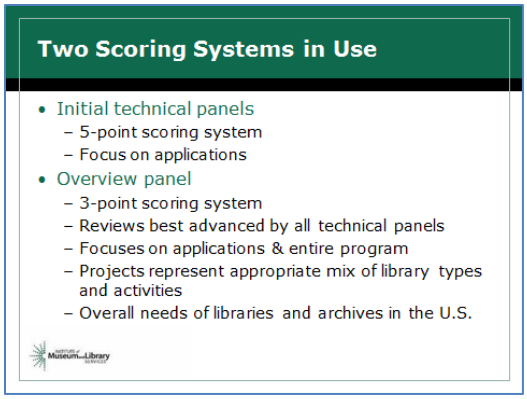


When evaluating applications it is critical for reviewers to be familiar with the *Guidelines.* IMLS asks you to express your professional judgment of each proposal by assessing if the proposal deals with priorities as listed in the program guidelines and by writing comments for each criterion. Your judgment should reflect how well you think the information provided in each proposal meets the goals and stated criteria of the specific priority.

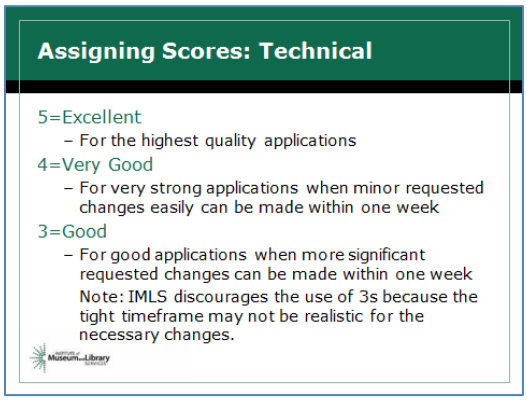
Qualities of a good proposal are that it demonstrates impact as defined in the *Guidelines,* it successfully addresses each criterion, and it addresses the goals for the appropriate category.



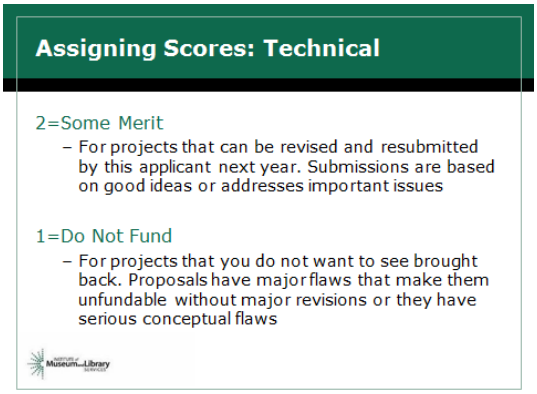
LB21 has the following five project categories and codes: Master's Level Programs (RE-01); Doctoral Programs (RE-02); Early Career Development (RE-04) ; Programs to Build Institutional Capacity (RE-05); and Continuing Education (RE-06). The three LB21 funding categories that are paired with one of the above project categories are Project Grant (the most popular), Collaborative Planning Grant, and National Forum Grant.



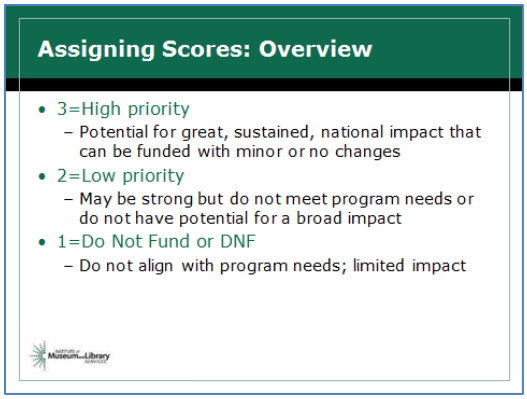
Two different scoring systems are used in the review process, one for the initial technical panels and the other for the overview panel. Technical panels use a 5-point scoring system and focus on the merits of each of the applications. The Overview panel uses a 3-point scoring system as it reviews the best applications advanced by all technical panels. It focuses on both the applications & the entire program, recommending projects that represent an appropriate mix of library types and activities and respond to the overall needs of libraries and archives in the U.S.



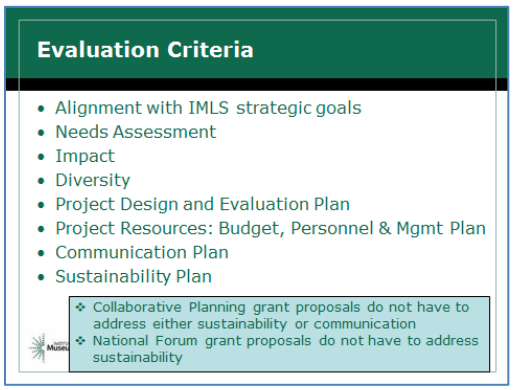
Technical panels use a 5-point scale in assigning scores. 5 equals excellent and is used for the highest quality applications that provide excellent support for each of the evaluation criteria through the proposed activities. These applications strongly demonstrate the potential for strategic impact. 4 equals very good and is used for very strong applications when requested changes are minor and easily can be made within one week. Strategic impact is present but not exemplary. 3 equals good and is used for applications when there are more significant requested changes but ones that can be made within one week. Note: IMLS discourages the use of 3s because the tight timeframe may not be realistic for the necessary changes.



The final two scores are used for applications that are not to be considered for funding in the current grant cycle. 2 equals some merit and indicates that submissions are based on good ideas or address important issues but are not ready to receive funding. Taking into consideration the recommendations and feedback from the review panel, these applications should be revised and resubmitted next year. 1 equals do not fund and is used for projects that you do not want to see brought back to this program. Proposals have major flaws that make them unfundable without major revisions or they have serious conceptual flaws. It is possible that they may be fundable in another IMLS grant category.



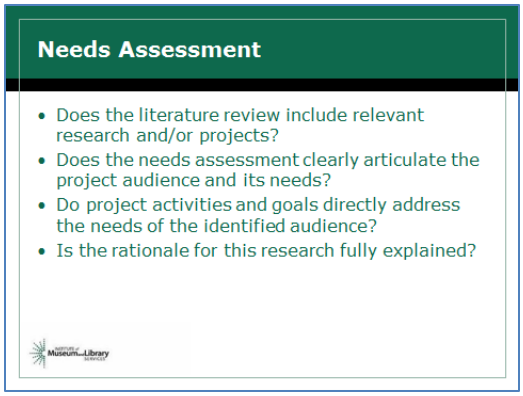
The Overview panel uses a 3-point scale in assigning scores. 3 equals high priority and is used for projects with the potential for great, sustained, national impact that can be funded with minor or no changes. 2 equals low priority and is used for projects that may be strong but do not meet the needs outlined in the program guidelines or that do not have the potential for a broad impact. 1 equals do not fund or DNF and is used for projects that do not align with the needs outlined in the program guidelines and are seen as having only a limited impact.



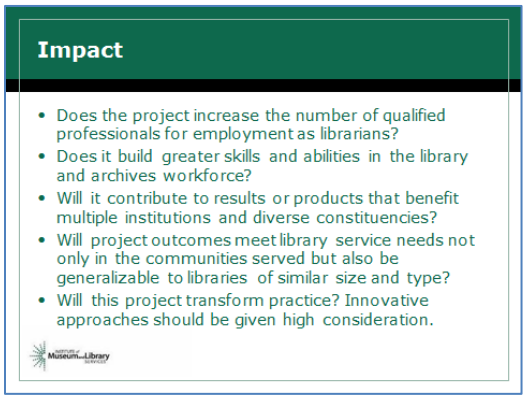
The evaluation criteria used in this program are as follows: alignment with IMLS strategic goals; needs assessment; impact; diversity; project design and evaluation plan; project resources: budget, personnel and management plan; communication plan; and sustainability plan.
Remember that Collaborative Planning grant proposals do not have to address sustainability or communication; and National Forum grant proposals do not have to address sustainability.

The five IMLS strategic goals are: Learning; Community; Content; Access; and Model Public Agency.

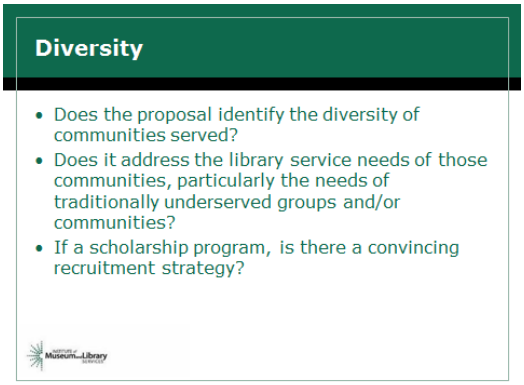
For more information go to:
www.imls.gov/about/strategic_plan.aspx



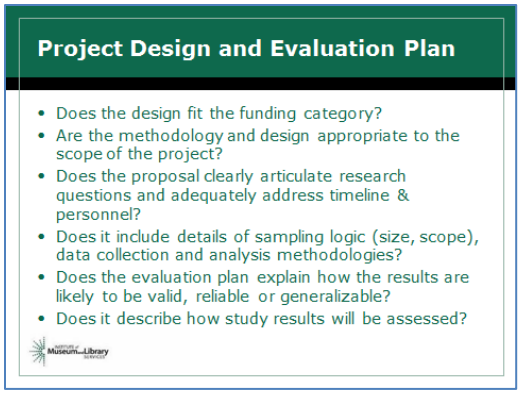
When evaluating the needs assessment, you should ask: Does the literature review include relevant research and/or projects?; Does the needs assessment clearly articulate the project audience and its needs?; Do project activities and goals directly address the needs of the identified audience?; and is the rationale for this research fully explained?



When evaluating the impact, ask: 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?; and will this project transform practice? Innovative approaches should be given high consideration.

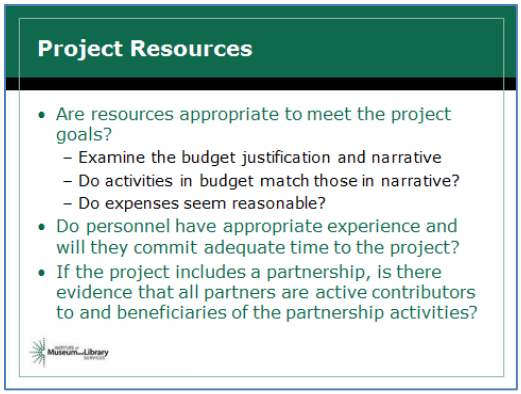


When evaluating the diversity, ask: Does the proposal identify the diversity of communities served?; Does it address the library service needs of those communities, particularly the needs of traditionally underserved groups and/or communities?;and if the proposal is for a scholarship program, is there a convincing recruitment strategy?

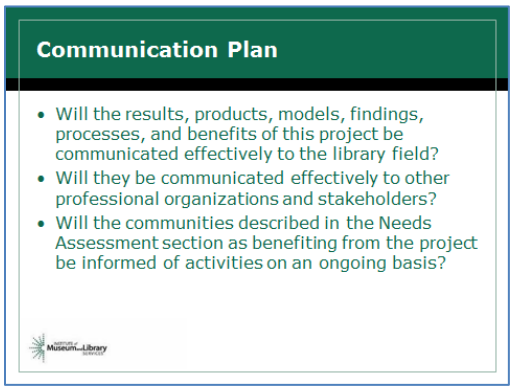


When evaluating the project design and the evaluation plan, ask: Does the design fit the funding category?; Are the methodology and design appropriate to the scope of the project?; Does the proposal clearly articulate research questions and adequately address timeline & personnel?;

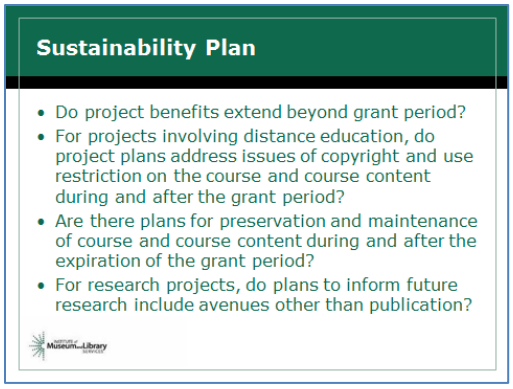
Does it include details of sampling logic (size, scope), data collection and analysis methodologies?; Does the evaluation plan explain how the results are likely to be valid, reliable or generalizable?; and Does it describe how study results will be assessed?



When evaluating the project resources, ask: Are resources appropriate to meet the project goals and examine the budget justification and narrative to see if activities in the budget match those in the narrative and if the expenses seem reasonable?; Do personnel have appropriate experience and will they commit adequate time to the project?; and if the project includes a partnership, is there evidence that all partners are active contributors to and beneficiaries of the partnership activities?

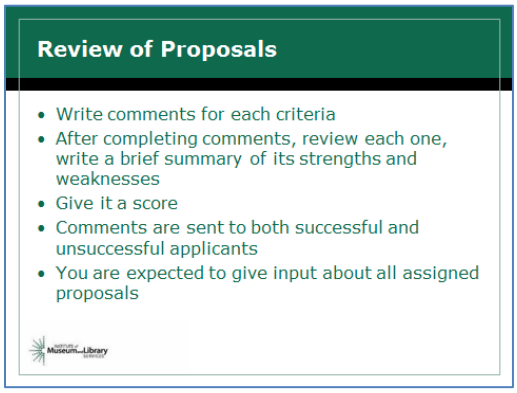


When evaluating the communication plan, ask: Will the results, products, models, findings, processes, and benefits of this project be communicated effectively to the library field?; Will they be communicated effectively to other professional organizations and stakeholders?; and will the communities described in the Needs Assessment section as benefiting from the project be informed of activities on an ongoing basis?



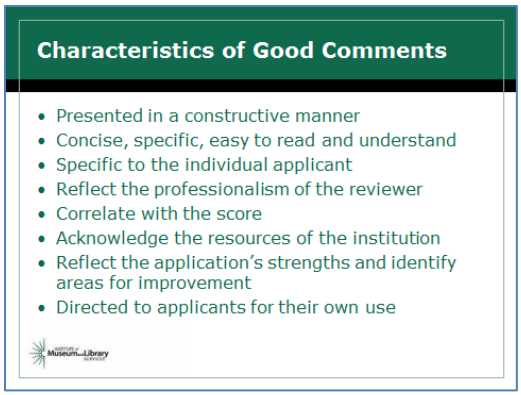
When evaluating the sustainability plan, ask: Do project benefits extend beyond the grant period?; For projects involving distance education, do project plans address issues of copyright and use restriction on the course and course content during and after the grant period?; Are there plans for the preservation and maintenance of course and course content during and after the expiration of the grant period?; and for research projects, do plans to inform future research include avenues other than publication?

Reviewer 101: section five, Comments to Applicants.

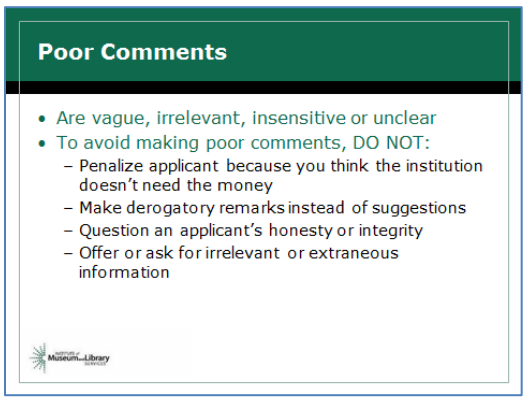


IMLS expects reviewers to write comments for each criteria. After completing comments, review each application and write a brief summary of its strengths and weaknesses, then give it a score. Comments are sent to both successful and unsuccessful applicants. You are expected to give input about all assigned proposals.

IMLS holds a conference call with panelists for applications with widely varying scores. The main goals of these calls are to have an open and productive discussion where panelists share their thoughts freely and respectfully, educating others on areas where they have expertise, listening and learning when they don't. Some notes about scoring that may be of interest to new reviewers: No consensus is required among readers of a proposal. It is very common for panelists to change their initial scores after discussions. Individual ratings and comments are shared with applicants.



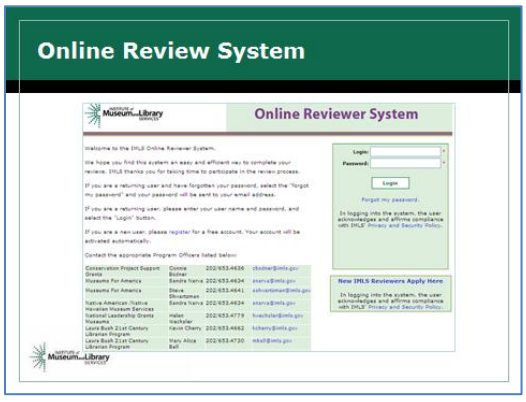
Characteristics of good comments are: They are presented in a constructive manner; they are concise, specific, easy to read and understand; they are specific to the individual applicant. Good comments reflect the professionalism of the reviewer and correlate with the score. They acknowledge the resources of the institution and reflect the application's strengths and identify areas for improvement. Finally, they are directed to applicants for their own use.



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 the applicant because you think the institution doesn't need the money – remember, any eligible institution may apply for and receive funds, regardless of need; Make derogatory remarks instead of suggestions; Question an applicant's honesty or integrity. You may question the accuracy of information provided by the applicant and if you are unsure how to raise your question, please contact IMLS. Do not offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information – your comments should concern only the information IMLS requests of all applicants.

Remember - Comments are sent to both successful and unsuccessful applicants and they use them to improve their awards or future applications.

Reviewer 101: section six, Online Reviewer System.



All reviewers will use the online reviewer system shown above in the screen shot. Type the URL provided by IMLS into your Internet browser. This initial screen provides basic instructions and program officer contact information. It is also where you log in to the system.

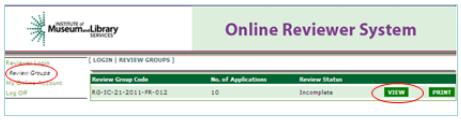
Gaining Access

- Once you are confirmed as a reviewer, IMLS will send you an email with the link to the system
- Log in using the e-mail address on file with IMLS
- New reviewers use the password provided
  - The first time you log in you will be prompted to create a new password and enter a secret question and answer
- When you log in the system displays four messages about security, privacy, confidentiality, and conflict on interest.
- Review these and press OK to continue.

Once you are confirmed as a reviewer, IMLS will send you an email with the link to the system and instructions for gaining access. Log in using the e-mail address on file with IMLS. If you are a new reviewer use the password provided. The first time you log in you will be prompted to create a new password and enter a secret question and answer. When you log in the system displays four messages about security, privacy, confidentiality, and conflict of interest. Review these and press OK to continue.

Viewing the List of Applications

- Click on Review Groups in the left-hand margin
- The code for your review panel is displayed along with the number of applications and status
- Click on View to list your assigned applications



Once you have logged in you can begin using the online review system. Click on Review Groups in the left-hand margin to display the code of your review panel along with the number of applications and the review status. Click on View on the right-hand side of the screen to list your assigned applications.

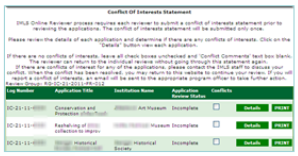
Viewing an Application

- Click on Details to retrieve an application

The initial Application Review Status of each application should be Incomplete. Click on Details to retrieve an individual application.

Conflicts of Interest

- All reviewers should read the full Conflict of Interest Statement as discussed under ethics
- Before you can begin to review any application you must complete a Conflict of Interest Statement



All reviewers should read the full Conflict of Interest Statement as discussed in the ethics section. Before you can begin to review any application you must complete a Conflict of Interest Statement.

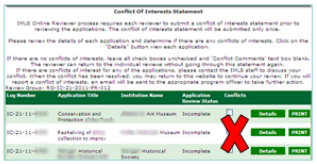
Conflicts of Interest -- No

- If you do not have a conflict of interest with any application press Submit Conflict of Interests Statement at the bottom of the screen
- Click on OK in the pop-up window confirming that you do not have any conflicts of interest

If you do not have a conflict of interest with any application press Submit Conflict of Interests Statement at the bottom of the screen. Then click on OK in the pop-up window confirming that you do not have any conflicts of interest.

Conflicts of Interest -- Yes

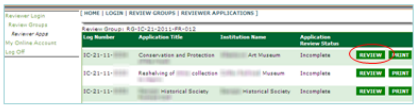
- If you do have a conflict of interest DO NOT click on the Conflicts box (known system problem)
- Contact a program officer immediately



If you do have a conflict of interest DO NOT click on the Conflicts box. This is a known system problem. Instead contact a program officer immediately.

Reviewing an Application

- System displays the list of applications
- Click on Review to begin the review process



The online reviewer system displays the list of applications you have been assigned. Click on Review to begin the review process.

Reviewing an Application

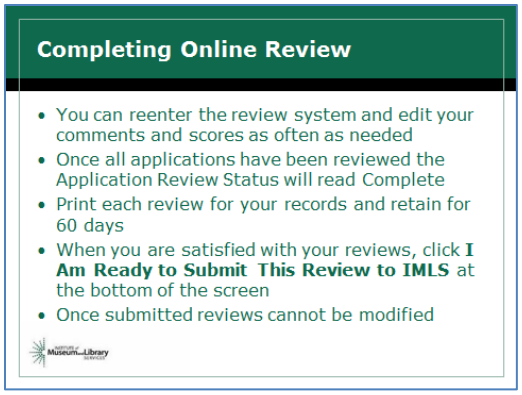
- Select review criteria and write comment
- Click on Save before moving to next criterion
- Score complete application after review of all criteria

Select one of the review criteria and write comments. Be sure to click on Save before moving to the next criterion. Score the complete application after a review of all criteria.

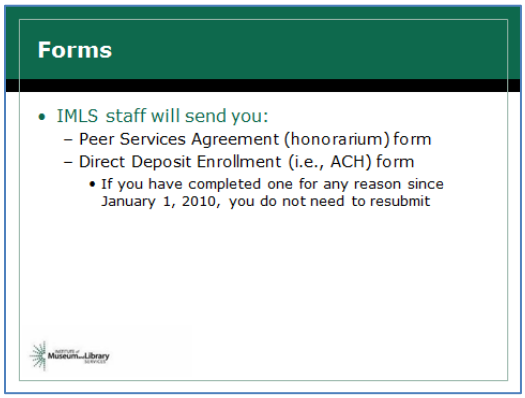
Reviewing an Application

- Advisable to write comments in a word processor then paste them into the online reviewer system
- Reviewers must submit comments for each of the application review criteria
- Click Save & Close when you have completed an application
- Use the left-hand menu to move between evaluation criteria or to the application overview
- Application overview is where you comment on and score the application as a whole

IMLS advises you to write comments in a word processor and then paste them into the online reviewer system. Reviewers must submit comments for each of the application review criteria. Click Save & Close when you have completed an application. Use the left-hand menu to move between evaluation criteria or to the application overview. The application overview section is where you comment on and score the application as a whole.



You can reenter the review system and edit your comments and scores as often as needed up until final submission. Once all the applications have been reviewed the Application Review Status will read Complete. Print each review for your records and retain the printouts for 60 days after submission. When you are satisfied with your reviews, click **I Am Ready to Submit This Review to IMLS** at the bottom of the screen. Remember that once your reviews have been submitted they cannot be modified.



A final piece of important administrative information. Before you serve as a reviewer IMLS staff will send you a Peer Services Agreement or honorarium form and a Direct Deposit Enrollment (i.e., ACH) form. If you have completed an ACH form for any reason since January 1, 2010, you do not need to resubmit it.