

IMLS FY24 National Leadership Grant for Museums Applicant Informational Video

0:03

Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Office of Museum Services Informational Video National Leadership Grants for Museums Applicant Information Session.

0:30

The goal of this video is to provide an overview of our National Leadership Grants for Museums program, which we call NLG-M for short, and the process of preparing an application for funding. This video is organized into six chapters. What is National Leadership Grant Program? This section explains the purpose and design of the National Leadership Grant Program.

0:58

What can NLG-M grants fund? This section explains the types of projects that can be funded in NLG-M and the amount of funds that can be requested. Application Components: An Overview. This section describes the types of documents that are needed to create an NLG-M grant application. Application Components: Narrative.

1:23

This section specifically provides guidance on composing the narrative part of the application. Application Components: Budget. This section specifically provides details on the information to include in your project budget and your project justification. Application Tips and Next Steps. The concluding section provides a few tips and next steps for you to take.

1:51

The complete set of instructions for how to prepare and submit an NLG-M grant application are found in a Notice of Funding Opportunity published on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and also available on the IMLS website. Please refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the most detailed information to prepare your application.

2:18

To get the most out of this video, we recommend that you watch it in its entirety. This will give you an understanding of the NLG-M grant program, the types of projects that can be funded, and the necessary application components. You may also want to review the NLG-M Notice of Funding Opportunity before, during, or after you watch the video. Notices of Funding Opportunity, also known as NOFOs,

2:44

are documents that detail the requirements of each of our grant programs. All of our Fiscal Year 24 NOFOs can be found at [imls.gov/grants](https://www.imls.gov/grants). As you navigate the application process, you can use this video as a reference tool. If you'd like to skip to a specific section, please use the time bar below or the links in the description box to navigate the chapters.

3:17

In this section, we'll answer the question, what is NLG-M, providing information on the purpose and intent of this grant program and who it is designed to serve. National Leadership Grants for museums supports projects that address critical needs of the museum field

3:38

and that have the potential to advance practice in the profession so that museums can improve services for the American public. NLG-M is all about addressing the challenges of the museum field, our institutions and our professionals. We invest in institutions and partnerships that understand the challenges and opportunities facing the field

4:03

and devise plans to move the field forward through the development of resources and tools for use by multiple institutions and/or groups of museum professionals. You can be one of three types of organizations to be eligible to apply to NLG-M. All applicants must be located in one of the United States' 50 states, its territories, or the District of Columbia.

4:36

And your organization must be a unit of state, local, or tribal government, or it must be a nonprofit organization with tax exempt status. To be eligible for funding as a museum, your organization must have at least one full time or equivalent professional staff person, either paid or unpaid; have a physical location that it owns or operates;

5:02

have been open to the public for at least 120 days in the year prior to the November 15, 2023 deadline; and own or use tangible objects. Museums may be standalone organizations, or they may be part of a larger institution such as a college or university, a tribe, or a state or local government.

5:26

You can also be eligible for NLG-M if you're an organization or association that engages in activities designed to advance the wellbeing of museums and the museum profession, or if you're a college or university. When we talk about museums, we include a broad range of institution types. Here's a list of some of the types of museums that routinely apply to this grant program.

6:03

In this section, we'll answer the question what NLG-M can fund, providing details on the types of projects and associated goals within the NLG-M grant program, as well as offer some summary data on the number and types of NLG-M projects that we funded last year.

6:27

Making sure your concept shares the characteristics of successful NLG projects is an important first step to preparing an application. We're looking for projects that are

designed intentionally to produce results that can be used by the field to advance and improve practice.

6:46

We're looking for tangible results such as models, tools, curriculum, resources, research findings, or new services that can be widely used, adapted, scaled or replicated to extend the benefit of the federal investment across the field or segment of the field. Projects should reflect a thorough understanding of current practice, knowledge about the subject matter, deep familiarity with previous work in the project topic,

7:16

and an awareness of and support for current strategic priorities in the field. We encourage collaboration that demonstrates broad need, field wide buy-in and input and access to appropriate expertise. Your project should align with one of these three project goals. As you can see, you should be seeking to advance the museum fields work in either lifelong learning, community engagement,

7:49

or collection stewardship and access. So, let's take a look at what kind of project activities might fit within these three goal areas. In this and the next two slides, the numbered objectives provide some of the types of projects that fit within the goal. A project in lifelong learning might include, but is not limited to, developing models with tools for scaling and adapting by other museums;

8:24

training and professional development for museum staff, volunteers, and those seeking a museum career; social science research on museum-based learning; and forums that bring together experts to explore current and emerging issues in the field.

8:45

A Community Engagement project will need to focus on producing resources that help museums better meet community needs and be welcoming places for everyone. Projects may help museums be more inclusive of diverse or underserved parts of their communities, improve access and remove barriers to participation, better engage with community organization and leaders for planning and civic engagement,

9:11

or support forums that bring together experts to explore current and emerging issues in the field. Under the Collection Stewardship and Access Goal, projects can develop tools that help museums facilitate access management, preservation, sharing and use of museum collections. They can focus on professional development for museum staff and volunteers to improve collection stewardship.

9:42

Projects can undertake research on management, conservation and preservation issues. And like for the other two goals, projects can bring together experts to explore issues and inform the field. NLG-M projects can request anywhere from \$50,000 to \$750,000. Full projects that result in robust results for the field require a one-to-one cost share.

10:15

Cost share may be in the form of cash, staff or volunteer time, other grantee contributed costs, or third party or partner contributions. It may not be funds from any other federal source. Scale your budget request to meet the needs of your project. Your budget should include the cost of the activities needed to accomplish the results.

10:41

It's important that the amount of funds requested match the scope and scale of your project. Research projects from \$50,000 to \$750,000 do not require a cost share. We'll talk more about research projects a little later. The number of applications received and the amount of awards made can vary from year to year. Here's a snapshot of our most recent application and award cycle.

11:14

In FY23, IMLS made 19 NLG-M awards with a total of just over \$8.44 million in federal funds. We received 48 NLG-M applications last year, resulting in just over 40% of those applications being funded. About 37% of the NLG-M awards were for projects supporting the lifelong learning goal.

11:41

42% of the project supported the collection, stewardship and access goal, and the remaining 21% of the projects supported the community engagement goal. The average amount of federal funds for each project was about \$444,232. On the IMLS website,

12:08

You can use the Search Awarded Grants function to explore an archive of grants that we have awarded in past years. All of the 19 FY23 NLG-M awards announced in August are listed here, along with those from prior years. You can search this database using a variety of criteria such as institution name, location, and keyword.

12:36

Your search will retrieve basic information about each award, including the amount of federal funds awarded and a brief description of the proposed activities and expected results for each project.

12:59

In this section, we'll introduce the components of an NLG-M grant application and provide an overview about the Required, Conditionally Required, and Supporting documents. The NLG-M Notice of Funding Opportunity or NOFO, includes a complete list of all application components.

13:32

Most of these components are created by applicants and saved as PDFs for uploading as part of your application package in grants.gov. The table of application components starting on page nine of the NOFO, which is Section D2a, lists which application components are required as well as those that are conditionally required.

13:59

For example, some components are included in the application depending on the type of applicant or the type of project. Aside from the SF-424S and the IMLS Museum Program Information form, which are both web-based forms completed in the grants.gov workspace, all application components must be submitted as PDF documents.

14:32

These are the required documents. All applications must include the documents listed here. Omission of even just one might result in your application's rejection. Also important to note, there is a 10-page limit for the narrative. If you exceed the page limit specified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity,

14:55

we must remove those extra pages before your application goes out for review. That means that your reviewers may have to stop reading in mid-sentence and will wonder about your organizational skills and your attentiveness to detail. So, make sure your content fits into the page limit specified and make sure the number of pages holds when you convert your document to a PDF.

15:32

The second category of application components is that of conditionally required documents. Some applications must include 1, 2, or even all four of these, and it's your job to figure out which are required for your application. If you're applying as a nonprofit,

15:50

you must include your nonprofit status letter from the IRS. We will not accept a letter of state sales tax exemption as proof of nonprofit status. If you're using a federally negotiated indirect cost rate in your budget, then you must include a copy of your final rate agreement. If you will create digital products during the course of your project, then you must complete this and submit the digital product plan.

16:20

If you are proposing a research project, then you must submit a data management plan. Just like the required documents, omission of one of these might result in your application's rejection. Please note that the term "digital product "includes both digitized and born digital content, resources and assets and software.

16:44

If you're creating any of these types of material, you must include the form with your application. The third group of application components is Supporting Documents, and here is a partial list of examples. Supporting documents are optional. You may submit some or none. Include only those items that will support your proposal.

17:11

This is not the place to introduce brand new information. Rather, as the name suggests, you should lend support to your project justification, work plan, and intended results that

you've already spelled out in your application narrative. For example, have you identified a partner whose involvement is key to the project's success?

17:33

If so, a letter of support or commitment would go a long way to reassuring reviewers that they are on-board and the project will succeed. Pictures can help give reviewers who may not be familiar with your institution, program, collections, or community a better idea of what you're describing within your narrative. Vendor quotes or equipment specifications show you've done some of the legwork in getting appropriate estimates for project costs.

18:02

We recommend that you be respectful of your reviewers' time and avoid the temptation to include hundreds of pages of extraneous material. Being judicious really does work to your benefit, as supporting documents can make or break an application. Include what is important, helpful, and directly relevant to your project and stop there.

18:30

In the following sections of this presentation, we'll focus on the narrative and budget. Refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity for complete instructions on how to prepare and complete all of the application components. In this section, we'll go over the questions you will need to answer in your project narrative and offer details on the review criteria associated with each section of the narrative: the Project Justification,

19:03

the Project Work Plan, and Project results. Now let's talk about the narrative of your proposal. You have 10 pages to cover 3 very important issues, and the Notice of Funding Opportunity provides lengthy guidance on what the narrative should cover. First, the Project Justification.

19:29

Which program goal and associated objectives of the National Leadership Grant Program for Museums will your project address? You can see those goals and objectives in Section A2 of this of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. What field wide need, problem, or challenge will your project address and how is it identified? You'll need to describe the sources you have used to define the need, problem, or challenge.

19:58

Who's the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning? Target group refers to those who will be immediately and positively affected by your project. Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project? Beneficiaries refer to those who are likely to be aided in the long term by your project. They may or may not be the same as your target group. How will the museum field benefit from your project?

20:26

How does this proposed project differ from, complement, or build upon existing theory, scholarship, and/or practice? In Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity under Review Criteria, you will find a list of questions for each section of the narrative that

reviewers are asked to consider when they review your proposal. It's a good idea to refer to these as you craft your narrative

20:54

to be certain, you are providing reviewers clear, solid information. You will see that they correspond fairly directly with the prompts you were given to write your narrative. The next section is Project Work Plan. If the Project Justification section was the Why, the Project Work Plan section is where you identify Who, What, When, and How. Who will do the activities and when and using what resources?

21:23

You should explain how you will track your progress towards achieving your intended results, and what you'll do if you need to correct course. We also ask you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project, and to tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning. Again, this is a list of questions from Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity that reviewers are asked to consider when they review your proposal,

21:52

so make sure your narrative is answering these effectively. For research projects, reviewers are asked to weigh in on another set of criteria. They'll look for appropriate research design and answers to the questions outlined in Appendix 5, Guidance for Research Applications.

22:17

If you find it difficult to answer these questions for your project, you might not have a research project at all. Project Results, the third section of your narrative, should be devoted to articulating your project's intended results. This section is your chance to convince the reviewers that your project will result in something getting better.

22:43

The need or problem you identified in your project justification will be addressed directly. The results should relate directly to the need you identified for the museum field. We ask you to tell us what data you will collect and report in order to measure your project's success. If your project will generate tangible products, and most of them do, here's the opportunity to describe them and make the case that they will be useful.

23:12

And last but not least, we ask that you tell us how you will sustain the benefit of the project. How will this improvement that you propose continue once your grant is over? Again, here is a list of review questions that reviewers are asked to consider when they read and score the project results section of your narrative.

23:38

These are found in Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. So, to recap, your narrative has three sections, Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results, and you have 10 pages to write it. The sections are all equally important. Write clearly, address what we ask you to address, and keep an eye on those review criteria.

24:08

They tell you exactly what the reviewers will be looking for, so make it easy for them to find it and understand it. Finally, make sure all sections of the narrative are connected. The work plan should describe the activities required to address the field-wide need, and the results should provide a solution to the need you identified. In this section, we will provide information on what to include in your project budget and budget justification.

24:42

And provide some examples of allowable and unallowable costs. An important component of your application is the budget. This is a part of the application where you specify all the costs associated with your proposed project. The budget consists of two required components, the IMLS budget form and the budget justification. The IMLS budget form is a fillable PDF

25:12

that accommodates up to three years of project activities and expenses. The budget should include the project costs that will be charged to grant funds as well as those that will be supported by cost share. In-kind contributions to cost share may include the value of services, staff, volunteer or consultant time, or equipment donated to the project.

25:39

All the items listed, whether supported by grant funds or cost share, must be necessary to accomplish the project activities, allowable according to the applicable Federal cost principles, auditable and incurred during the award period of performance. The IMLS budget form can be downloaded directly from the IMLS website at

26:09

www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/imls-budget-form. As you develop your budget, keep in mind that there are certain costs that are either allowable or unallowable according to federal regulations. The allowability of a cost item for all federal grants are specified in the Code of Federal Regulations at CFR.

26:45

Sometimes referred to as "2 CFR 200" for short, but the full title is Title 2, Subtitle A, Chapter II, Part 200 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. Using 2 CFR 200 as a basis, we've developed a short list of allowable costs that are most common to NLG-M projects.

27:10

See page 19 of the NLG-M Notice of Funding Opportunity, which includes a partial list of the most common examples of allowable costs. This short list of allowable costs are also shown on the slide. These costs may be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for with federal funds, or what will be paid for through a contribution through cost share.

27:37

The rules about allowability apply equally to grant funds as well as cost share. When completing your project budget, be sure to check that all the costs you include, whether

grant funds or cost share, are allowable. There are also some costs which are unallowable according to the federal regulations in 2 CFR 200 on page 19 of the NLG Notice of Funding Opportunity,

28:07

we also provide an abbreviated list of unallowable costs. These are also listed on this slide. Unallowable costs may not be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for, nor can they be part of what you will pay for as part of your cost share. In fact, unallowable expenses can't show up anywhere in your proposal.

28:29

If, after you have reviewed 2 CFR 200, you have specific questions, please contact us and we'll be happy to help. In addition to the IMLS Budget Form, you will also prepare a Budget Justification. This is an opportunity to provide a more detailed explanation or justification for the project costs.

28:55

Budget justification should be written to follow the cost categories in the IMLS budget form. In the justification, you'll identify each expense and show the method of cost computation used to determine each dollar amount, including any that you may have consolidated and summarized in the IMLS budget form.

29:18

In other words, please show your math. Don't make us try to figure out how you got to \$10,000 for travel to conferences. For example, in the section Salaries and Wages, you should identify each person whose salary and wages will be paid with IMLS funds or by cost share. Provide their names and describe their roles in the project. Document the method of cost computation by including the base salary or wages for each person,

29:47

and the percentage of time each person is allocated to the project activities, which may be shown as a percentage of time, number of days, or number of hours. If cost share is being provided by unpaid volunteers, explain how you arrived at the dollar amount used to represent the value of their services. In the section for supplies, materials and equipment,

30:12

you should list each type of supply, material and equipment you proposed to purchase or provide as cost share for the project. Detail the number and unit costs for each and explain how you arrive at the dollar amounts. You may also provide vendor quotes or price lists as supporting documents with your application.

30:38

In this final section of our presentation, we offer some application tips and next steps. We can only make grants to eligible applicants that submit complete applications, including attachments, on or before the deadline. So here are some tips to help you do just that. Start early. You've already done that by listening to this webinar.

31:06

Become familiar with grants.gov workspace. It has many good features, including upfront validation which allows you to correct errors prior to submission, and the opportunity to collaborate with others in creating your application. Consider starting with the workspace overview and check out the tutorials. Do your background research, make it easy for reviewers to see that you're up to date and know what you're talking about.

31:35

Be sure your application is complete. Check it against the table of application components in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Make sure all application components are in the proper format and follow the correct naming conventions. Submit to grants.gov early so you can correct any errors and avoid any drama created by technical challenges.

32:03

It's important to get your application submitted online through grants.gov before the deadline. IMLS does not accept applications by mail or e-mail. In order to register with grants.gov, you must have an active sam.gov registration and a unique entity identifier (UEI) number. So, make sure your registration for both of these sites are complete, your accounts are active, and that any necessary passwords are current.

32:31

These registrations expire periodically, so do not wait until it's time to hit the submit button to check on them. You should coordinate with any other staff members, such as your authorized organization representative, who may hold the accounts and passwords you'll need to submit. Both the sam.gov and grants.gov websites have robust help features and FAQ's.

32:58

If you run into technical issues with either of these sites, you should reach out to their help desks and request a tracking case or ticket number in order to document your issue and attempts at resolving it. Failure to have active sam.gov or grants.gov registrations by the application deadline is not an excuse for submitting a late application, so again, start early.

33:28

There are many components to the application, and the narrative is an essential and critical part of the package. Peer reviewers, museum professionals from all types of museums, will be selected by IMLS to read each application and provide constructive and critical comments on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposed project. They base their reviews only on the information contained in the application.

33:56

So don't assume that a reviewer or IMLS will know something about your museum or your project. To help make sure your narrative is as clear and complete as possible, revisit the NLG-M notice of Funding Opportunity and follow the narrative outline it provides. Be sure to consider the review criteria associated with each section of the narrative. Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections in your narrative to make it easy to follow.

34:27

Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon. The people who will review your applications are museum professionals. Some may be very familiar with your topic and your discipline, but they may not all be totally familiar with your field's shorthand. Make it easy for them to understand what you mean.

34:50

An advantage to starting your application early is that you can ask a colleague, friend, or family member to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit. Ask them to act like a reviewer who's seeing it for the first time. IMLS offers a few ways to find examples of funded projects. We already talked about the search awarded grants function on our website.

35:18

You can see the filters I selected on the left: the last three years on the top there, and National Leadership Grants for Museums at the bottom. We have also posted the abstract, narrative and schedule of completion for a cross section of successful NLG for Museums applications.

35:41

The proposals posted present a variety of project types, meet the overarching goal of the NLG-M Grant program, and were considered to be clear and well written by the reviewers. Looking at these exemplary proposals might help clarify your thinking about your own application. The image on the right shows the sample application page. You'll need to Scroll down to find the National Leadership Grant Program.

36:14

Here are a few important dates relating to NLG-M applications. Applications must be received through grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on November 15, 2023. This date is not negotiable. The time stamp is auto generated by grants.gov and we have no ability to override that.

36:37

So again, start early and submit your application early. That way, if you encounter a difficulty of any kind when submitting your proposal, you'll have some time to resolve the problem and resubmit. After the application deadline, IMLS staff will review your application for completeness and eligibility, and you will hear from us via e-mail if there are any problems.

37:01

Next, we'll select experienced and knowledgeable peer reviewers to review your application and provide scores and comments based on the criteria outlined in the NLG-M Notice of Funding Opportunity. IMLS staff will examine your budget, your financials, and your track record with past and current grants. We then prepare materials for the IMLS Director, who by law is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions.

37:31

This typically happens in July. In early August 2024, we'll notify you by mail of the award decisions and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers. NLG-M projects must be scheduled to start on the first day of September 2024.

37:54

As you read through the NOFO and prepare your application, additional questions may arise before the application deadline. We can answer questions about the NLG-M grant program or any other grant program at IMLS, address specific concerns with the various application components, or help you understand the review process. Contact information for program staff is listed on the grant program landing page on the IMLS website.

38:22

You may also schedule a counseling call to talk directly with program staff. Use the link found on the Grant program landing page to find an available time slot on your calendar. You'll then receive an e-mail with a calendar invite and Microsoft Teams meeting link. Thank you for listening to this webinar and good luck.