

Timed Transcript for IMLS Office of Museum Services Webinar: Museum Grants for African American History and Culture FY 2022 Information Session

0:01

Hello, and welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services' webinar, the IMLS Museum Grants for African American History and Culture, Fiscal Year 2022 Information Session.

0:14

My name is Mark Isaksen. I'm one of the Program Officers in the Office of Museum Services, and speaking on behalf of the rest of the staff.

0:22

We're delighted that you're interested in preparing an application for the IMLS Museum Grants for African American History and Culture grant program.

0:30

During the course of this presentation, I'll be referring to the program as AAHC, which is our abbreviation for the program title.

0:44

In this webinar, I'll be covering the following topics: Where to find information,

0:51

An overview of the AAHC grant program.

0:55

We'll talk about the funding eligibility criteria.

1:00

We'll review the program goals and objectives. We'll talk about funding levels, Allowable and unallowable costs, Application Components, Narrative review criteria, where to learn more, and a few application tips and next steps to get you started.

1:22

This webinar is one of a series designed to help you find the information you need to create a competitive application for IMLS museum funding.

1:31

Choosing a Funding Opportunity is available as a video and as a PDF on our website at the link identified here.

1:39

In that webinar, we cover the IMLS, mission, and strategic plan. We also address institutional eligibility for applicants and provide a quick overview of all of our funding opportunities. We also show you how to find information online with a focus on our website, and cover the three places you must be registered in order to apply for an IMLS grant.

2:00

In addition to the webinar that you're watching now about the AAHC program, we're making available on demand webinars for each of the museum grant programs, and those are available on our website.

2:14

Now, the IMLS website is an important place to find information. And when you go to the website, you'll see a drop-down menu for Grants on our homepage.

2:24

And you'll want to click on this section, Apply for a Grant, and this is the section that has most information that would be of interest to you as a potential applicant.

2:36

Each grant program has a landing page on the IMLS website.

2:40

And here, you will find a brief overview of the grant program, contact information for the IMLS staff assigned to this grant program.

2:48

And a link to the PDF of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

2:53

The Notice of Funding Opportunity, is sometimes referred to as the NOFO,

2:58

is the official instructions and guidance for how to prepare, complete, and submit an application for funding.

3:05

Now, much of the text and information I'm using in this webinar are derived from the instructions and guidance found in the NOFO.

3:12

And there is a NOFO for each of our grant funding opportunities.

3:16

Let's discuss in more detail the Museum Grants for African American History and Culture.

3:23

The AAHC grant program is designed to build the capacity of African American museums and support the growth and development LPs and professionals at African Americans.

3:33

The AAHC grant program supports projects that nurture museum professionals, builds institutional capacity, and increases access to museum and archival collections at African American museums.

3:45

And also, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, HBCUs, IMLS welcomes applications from museums of all sizes, and geographic areas whose primary purpose, as reflected in their mission, is African American art, life, history, and culture.

4:07

Now, this AAHC grant program was created by an act of Congress in 2003, and it's the same act that created the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

4:17

The legislation that created the museum directed IMLS to create a grant program to improve operations and care of collections and professional management at African American museums across the country.

4:28

And that's what this grant program is designed to do, to strengthen the institutional capacity

4:33

in the African American museum community.

4:36

And since that time, we've made many grants. We've had over 648 applications in total, and made about 239 grants during that time, awarding about \$25 million in funding, and peer reviewers.

4:53

So, we're talking about that a little bit later, but we use a peer review process in this application program, and about 216 folks have served as peer reviewers, and if you're interested in serving as a peer reviewer, I encourage you to do that.

5:08

It's a great learning opportunity to really understand the application and review process.

5:16

Now, here are the figures for the most recent application cycle.

5:18

The amount of funding that's available in this grant program and all IMLS grant programs is determined by the U.S. Congress through the Federal Appropriations process.

5:29

Now, in FY 21, Congress appropriated an additional \$500,000 to increase the amount of funds available to make awards in this grant program.

5:40

Although Congress has yet to pass a final budget for FY 2022, which begins on October first, we anticipate that the funding for this program will remain the same as the prior year.

5:52

In FY 2021, we made 24 awards for about \$3.2 million.

5:58

You can see that is an increase from the prior year, which was \$2.7 million, and the average size of each award is about \$134,000.

6:13

Let's look at the eligibility criteria for the program. The general IMLS funding eligibility criteria can be found on our website and is shown in this screenshot.

6:23

And this applies to the AAHC program.

6:26

To summarize, you're likely to be eligible to receive funding if you meet the IMLS definition of a museum

6:31

as described on our website. You're a non-profit organization, or a part of state or local government.

6:40

Individuals are not eligible to receive funding from IMLS.

6:44

Only entities listed in this slide are eligible.

6:50

Now, in addition to the general IMLS funding eligibility criteria, the AAHC grant program has specific eligibility criteria that's described in the NOFO.

7:01

So, to be eligible for an award under this grant program, you must qualify as one of the following.

7:09

You should be a museum whose primary purpose, as reflected in its mission, is African American life, art, history, and or culture. That comes directly from our authorizing legislation for the grant program.

7:21

So, your mission, primary purpose, must be focused on African American art, history, culture.

7:29

Or you could be a non-profit museum service organization, or an association whose primary purpose is to support African American museums itself.

7:41

An example of that would be AAAM, which is the Association of African American Museums.

7:47

Or, the third category is, any of the federally designated Historically Black Colleges and Universities. HBCUs may be eligible even if they do not have a museum.

7:59

HBCUs are often repositories of important historical material and we do see a number of them apply this grant program.

8:08

So, those are the categories of eligibility.

8:11

And if you're curious about eligibility, I encourage you to schedule time to talk to me or one of the program staff to discuss your particular situation. We can give you advice and help you further understand eligibility criteria before you apply.

8:28

So, looking at the goals of the program, the way we've designed the program, there really are two essential goals. Projects in this, as seen on this slide, are about building the capacity of African American museums and their ability to serve their communities.

8:46

And this can happen in many ways.

8:48

It might involve increasing the number of museum staff working at your museum, helping to the museum to expand its education programs, and engage with the community.

8:58

To enhance professional management, or improve the care of the collections.

9:05

Some examples of the kinds of project activities you might apply for are exhibition design, development, fabrication; interpretive and educational program development and delivery;

9:18

Maybe it's new planning activities, or collections planning, interpretive planning, strategic planning, even, using professionals and bringing in consultants.

9:29

Implementing those recommendations from planning activities; cataloging, inventorying, and documenting, and registering your collections. It's a lot of, many grants we get for work in digitizing collections.

9:43

These are all the kinds of things that we consider under this large goal of building the capacity of your museum, and to improve and enhance the way that you serve your community.

9:57

Goal two in this program focuses on the growth and development of museum professionals at African American museums.

10:04

This could involve developing and implementing internships, and fellowships, and mentoring programs that are designed to support emerging professionals

10:15

who are entering the museum field.

10:17

Maybe developing and implementing equitable and more inclusive staff recruitment and retention programs, or maybe creating learning and growth opportunities designed to build skills and enhance knowledge, and provide opportunities for your staff to

10:35

Share and develop expertise.

10:43

Those are the broad goals of the program, and give you a sense of the kinds of things that this grant program is seeking to support.

10:50

Hopefully, that aligns with the kinds of things that are important to your museum, and that you're seeking funding for. So, you want to align your project ideas with the goals of the grant program.

11:02

Let's think about the funding levels.

11:04

So, the amount of funding that you might be requesting. In this grant program, there are two options, really, for you to consider.

11:14

The size of your project and how much you're requesting in federal funds will determine the cost share requirement and how many applications you're allowed to submit.

11:23

For small projects, requesting an amount of federal funds between \$5,000 and \$50,000, you do not need to provide cost share.

11:31

This option is designed for smaller scale projects.

11:36

Projects that require less than \$50,000 in federal funds, no cost share required.

11:42

For larger projects, ones that are requesting an amount of federal funds, between \$50,001 and \$250,000, you must provide a 1 to 1 cost share.

11:53

Cost may be in the form of cash, staff, or volunteer time, or third party contributions, but it may not be funds from another federal source.

12:06

If you submit an application at the \$5,000 to \$50,000 funding level, without cost share, you are limited to one application in this grant program.

12:18

If you submit an application at the higher level, \$50,000 to \$250,000, you may submit more than one application at this funding level, to this grant program, so if you're doing one of the

cost share applications in the larger funding level, you can submit another cost share application.

12:35

If you have two projects that you want to submit, this is rare, we don't have that happen too often.

12:42

Most folks focus on one project that's a high priority for the organization, and that's all that gets submitted.

12:49

Again, if you have any questions about this, feel free to reach out to me or the other program staff to talk about your specific situation.

12:57

Now, we'll turn to allowable and unallowable costs for your project and we want you to be careful when you're preparing your proposal to include only allowable costs in both the IMLS part of your budget, the federal funds side, as well as your cost share, if that's applicable.

13:13

We'll go through some common expenses that are allowable and unallowable.

13:18

But we want you to know that these determinations of allowable and unallowable costs all come from 2 CFR 200, the Federal Cost Principles.

13:29

There's a link here. And it's available electronically, and you can do a search for a particular type of cost, if you're curious about what the federal rules are.

13:38

And these are what apply to any federal grant making entity.

13:43

Now, in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for this program, we did provide a partial list of some of the most common examples of allowable costs.

13:51

Pictured here.

13:52

These may be part of what you're asking IMLS to pay for, or it could be part of the cost share, the rules about allowability apply to both sides.

14:00

So, for example, personnel, salaries, wages, and fringe benefits. So, if part of your person's time is working on this project, you can put that on the grant funds, you can put that on the cost share.

14:12

You could split it up.

14:15

However you want in the budget.

14:17

Travel expenses, materials, supplies, equipment, consultant costs, internships, and fellowships. Most folks do paid internships, so these are going to show up as a budget cost item.

14:33

So, anyway, these are all allowable costs.

14:36

Now, some examples of unallowable costs. These are things that you may not be part of what you ask for IMLS to pay for. And it can't be part of the cost share.

14:46

So, you don't want these anywhere in your budget because they're unallowable.

14:50

Things like that would be fundraising costs, development office staff. We can't pay for general fund raising costs. We can't pay for construction or renovation of your facility.

15:04

We can pay for fabrication of a new exhibit.

15:08

We CAN pay for new shelving for your collections, but we can't pay to do construction.

15:16

So, you want to look at those list of unallowable costs and make sure that those don't show up anywhere in your budget.

15:24

Now, let's review the multiple parts of the grant application that you'll need to prepare.

15:29

The application components are a series of documents that you'll upload in Grants dot gov.

15:34

These application components fall into three categories. The first is required documents.

15:39

All applications must include these, and if you omit one, that could mean that your application is excluded from further review. The second group is that of conditionally required documents, and some applications must include these, and it might depend on the nature of your institution or some aspect of your project.

15:59

And the third group is supporting documents, and these are completely optional.

16:04

Next, your AAHC application will consist of a series of individual documents and it's very important to make sure you prepare and submit everything necessary.

16:14

In this case, your application will have 11 required documents, and they're all listed here.

16:20

The seven documents listed on the left side of this screen are created by you using a Word document or word processing program, and you create those and save them as a PDF.

16:34

Instructions for required documents are found in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

16:38

Many of these also have page limits, so if you exceed the page limit, we're going to remove the extra pages. So, make sure your content fits into the page limit specified, especially when you convert them to PDFs.

16:53

Now, the application documents listed on the right-hand side of the screen, the four documents, are the Application for Federal Assistance, the IMLS Supplementary Information Form, the IMLS Museum Program information Form, are online forms that you will complete in the Grants dot gov environment.

17:12

And the IMLS Budget Form is also a fillable form as a PDF.

17:19

So, everything else is going to be created by you, except for those four documents, which are standard forms.

17:25

And they all get submitted through Grants dot gov.

17:34

I want to talk about one new required document.

17:40

Again, the instructions for the required documents are all in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, but I wanted to talk about this one in particular, because at the end of last year, the government added a new requirement to all federal awards, and we're required to measure the performance of awardees in this performance measurement requirement.

17:57

It's different than project evaluation, which is typically included in your proposal.

18:01

So, performance measurement, in this case, it tells us how good a job you did as a federal awardee, and it helps IMLS understand, manage, and improve our grant programs and the assistance that we provide to applicants and awardees.

18:17

How that's different from project evaluation is that project evaluation is all about your project's intended results and outcomes.

18:24

Project evaluation will be covered in the narrative part of your application

18:28

Following the questions that we ask in the NOFO, such as, what need you're addressing, what associated results do you want your project to have, how you'll track that progress, and how the knowledge or skills of your target audience will change as a result of the project. Those are all ways of evaluating the success of your project, and we'll talk about that in the narrative.

18:52

In this case, there's a new requirement for performance measurements, and we give an example in the Notice of Funding Opportunity in this chart.

19:02

That you can use, or you can create your own.

19:05

But essentially, we have four performance measures: one for effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and timeliness.

19:16

And you're going to be asked to provide information about each of those.

19:21

And across the top are the information points

19:25

we're asking you to use in your statements with examples of each.

19:30

So, for instance, with the Data We Will Collect, are listed counts such as costs or weights, or hours, as well as qualitative measures, such as observations, opinion, feelings.

19:50

For each performance measure, we provide a couple of examples addressing the issues that might turn up in museum projects.

19:56

The blank space is where we suggest you write your own performance measure statements, and the chart can expand to allow as much space as needed.

20:06

We're looking for really just one statement for each required performance measure.

20:11

You can provide more than one if you wish, but one is all that's needed. So, use those examples there.

20:22

Do your best.

20:28

Now, I want to move from talking about the required documents to talking about the conditionally required documents.

20:35

Some applications must include 1 or 2 or even all of these, and it's your job to figure out which ones are required.

20:42

So, for example, the first one, if you're applying as a non-profit organization, then you must include your proof of non-profit status, which is a determination letter from the IRS.

20:52

So, again, if you're a non-profit organization and you have a non-profit status designation from the IRS, we want to see a copy of that determination letter.

21:05

If you're using a negotiated indirect cost rate in your budget, then you must include a copy of that final rate agreement.

21:12

Typically, this is mostly institutions of higher education like HBCUs, or other large organizations.

21:21

If you create digital products during the course of your project, then you must complete and submit a Digital Product Plan, and the term digital product includes digitized and born digital content and or software.

21:37

Now, if you're requesting support for conservation treatment, then you must include detailed condition reports and or formal conservation treatment proposals.

21:49

So, just like the required documents, if you exclude one of these, it could be an issue in our further consideration of your application.

22:01

Now, the third group of application components is the supporting documents.

22:05

And these are completely optional. You should include only those that supplement the narrative and support the project description you provide in your application.

22:15

The kinds of supporting documents you may choose to include could vary depending on the type of project activities that you're proposing in your application.

22:24

So, for example, here's some examples of some of the things that peer reviewers who will be reading your application will expect to see.

22:34

So, for projects that build organizational capacity by adding new staff, you want to make sure that you've considered including position descriptions for those new staff, that explain the assigned duties and required qualifications.

22:51

You could even add an org chart, an organizational chart, or a description of the leadership and supervisory structure of your organization to show how these new positions exist and connect to the existing staff.

23:04

Now, if you're helping to support the growth and development of museum staff or interns, maybe you want to, again, have the position descriptions for those interns with their duties and learning outcomes. Maybe a recruitment plan.

23:21

How you are going to recruit these interns. Letters of support from HBCUs or other institutions of higher education that you might be partnering with,

23:31

Or if it's with your existing staff, maybe a training needs assessment.

23:36

Some sort of assessment or discussion you had to identify the priority areas among your staff for training.

23:50

When you think about taking care of your collections and increasing and improving the care of your collections, you might want to include, as a supporting document, information that helps reviewers understand the scope and scale of your museum collection.

24:05

Some baseline information. These are things that can't, that maybe don't fit into the narrative, but give the reviewers a fuller picture of your collection.

24:18

So, maybe some more details about how you're going to process the collection to be cataloged and digitized.

24:25

Maybe a description of the audience that's going to gain access to the collection or a letter or letters of support from the representatives of that object.

24:34

Or even in the collections management plan, or other kind of documents you have

24:39

That, again, helps your reviewers see how you're managing your collection.

24:44

These are examples of some of the things that peer reviewers will expect to see. And they do help support the case that you're making in your application.

24:52

If it's funded, you can be successful in completing your project.

24:59

The heart of the application, the most essential part of the application, is the narrative, one of the required components of your application.

25:07

This is where the reviewers are going to spend the most time.

25:11

So, let's examine the narrative section of the application.

25:14

In the AAHC grant program, the narrative is limited to seven pages and divided into three sections: The Project Justification, the Project Work Plan, and the Project Results.

25:25

The questions we ask you to answer and the review criteria by which your application will be judged.

25:31

These are all posted in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

25:35

So, for example, in the Project Justification, you're going to lay out the reasoning for your project.

25:39

You're going to tell us in the clearest terms possible, what need, problem, or challenge you expect to address, who or what will benefit, and how your project will connect to the goals of the AAHC grant program.

25:54

We also have some new words here in the narrative, where we talk about target group and beneficiaries.

25:59

And so, target group is the folks, the people, or collections that are going to be most immediately and positively affected by your product.

26:09

So, during the course of your project. Beneficiaries are those that are likely to be aided in the long term by your project. They may not may or may not be the same as the target group.

26:20

The beneficiaries are more of the long term. The target group is sort of the immediate, near term groups that are engaged in your project.

26:33

The review criteria is also listed here. Again, this is in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. These are the exact questions we ask reviewers to look for in your narrative.

26:43

So, they're going to see how well you've identified the need, problem, or challenge. How you address and how well you've supported that with relevant evidence.

26:53

Whether you've clearly identified who or what's going to benefit from the project.

26:57

And if this involves an audience of some kind, whether they've been involved in the planning, right?

27:05

For collections, they're gonna look to see if they've been adequately described and if you provided enough detail.

27:13

And, again, this is where, if you're running out of room in the narrative, you just reference a see supporting document for a complete summary or a list of your collection.

27:28

Now, you've heard me mention this in the Project Justification, the need, problem, or challenge, which is the foundational part of the justification.

27:39

And, in this case, the federal government wants its investment to result in something getting better.

27:45

As you define your need, problem, or challenge, you want to articulate what will get better as a result of your project.

27:53

Will someone learn something? Will a new skill be developed? Will members of your community be able to work together in different ways? Will your collections be better cared for?

28:05

Will access to your collections, and the information they contain, be expanded?

28:11

Identify why it's important that this particular change happens.

28:16

And be sure to include data to support your problem definition.

28:26

The second part of the narrative is the Work Plan.

28:29

And this is where we ask you to tell us what specific activities you will undertake, who's going to plan and implement and manage the project, when and in what sequence your activities will occur.

28:40

What financial, personnel, and other resources you'll need to carry out the activities.

28:45

How you'll track progress toward achieving your intended results, and how you're going to share those results.

28:51

Also, in this program, you'll need to make sure to include as one of the financial resources to take care of your activities, is a \$3,000 line item in the grant funds section.

29:06

This is for IMLS designated travel.

29:09

This expense is used to cover your participation in a convening of our grantees

29:14

at place and location to be determined by IMLS.

29:22

Then, in this Work Plan, again, the reviewers are going to be looking at these questions that we've provided them. They're going to look to see how well your activities are informed

29:31

by appropriate theory and practice, whether the team you put together has the experience necessary to complete the work successfully. That's why we also ask for resumes for your key project staff.

29:44

Then, they're going to look at the schedule to see if the schedule is realistic and achievable.

29:49

They'll also be looking at whether the time, the personnel, and the financial resources are appropriate to the scope and scale of the project.

29:57

They want to make sure that you've designed it in a way that's realistic and likely to be successful.

30:08

The Work Plan is really structured as a series of activities, so just to be clear about what an activity is, it's something that someone does, has a beginning and an end, just like projects.

30:22

You know you've finished it because it doesn't need to be done anymore. It's no longer on your to-do list. It's not a goal, or result, or an outcome. Rather, an activity is just something you do. It's part of striving to achieve these bigger outcomes.

30:37

So, when talking about your activities in the Project Work Plan, aim for a reasonable level of detail.

30:44

When you're developing the Schedule of Completion, that's going to be a listing of all your high level activities that you're going to sequence in year 1, 2, or 3 of your project.

30:55

So, in the Work Plan, it should connect with those activities and talk about them in sequence.

31:05

The final section of the narrative is the Project Results section, and this is where we ask you to articulate the impact of your project. So, what specific results do you intend to achieve?

31:17

Well, something will get better, hopefully, at the end of your project, so we want you to tell us what that is. What products are going to result from your project? How you're going to sustain the benefits of the project beyond the grant period.

31:32

These are all the things you need to look at in results.

31:34

And reviewers are going to give us their opinions of how well you've developed a feasible plan for collecting and reporting data about your project.

31:45

Whether the improvements that you proposed will be realized and will occur as you've planned and scheduled. Will the products be useful to the audience that you've identified?

32:01

And whether your plan for sustaining the benefits of the project is reasonable and practical.

32:10

When you think about results, it's important to

32:14

think about that questions we referenced a few slides ago when we talked about defining the need problem or challenge.

32:21

If you said someone will learn something,

32:25

how are you going to know at the end that they've learned?

32:28

If it's related to a community project,

32:33

say, your community is going to be able to engage more effectively, how will you know when that's been achieved?

32:40

If your collections will be better cared for,

32:43

how will you be sure that they will be better cared for and how will you measure that group?

32:50

And if you're digitizing your collection to make it more accessible, for example, how will you know that's done? What does the end result look like?

33:02

And those results should tie back to the need, problem, or challenge that you identified in the justification.

33:12

You might also consider a logic model. It's a useful tool to help explain your intended results, and your plan for achieving them.

33:23

Many reviewers appreciate seeing a logic model included as a supporting document in your application.

33:29

We also have a tutorial on logic models available. It's called Shaping Outcomes, and that's available on the IMLS website.

33:42

So, in summary, let's consider all the components of your application. Everything in the narrative, all the other documents that you're going to be submitting and preparing.

33:52

These are the high level characteristics that we commonly see in the most successful applications.

33:59

First, is that you're demonstrating an institutional impact, that your project is going to build the capacity of your museum, and or support the growth and development of museum professionals at your museum.

34:11

Second, is that your proposal has a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.

34:21

So, if you're developing new education programs for K 12 audiences.

34:25

Whats that based on? Are you using your state's curriculum plan? Are you adapting material from from another source, or are you creating materials from scratch? Are you bringing in a consultant?

34:38

All of those things are great and possible ways of doing the work.

34:42

But you want to make sure that you're reflecting current practice and methodology.

34:47

Talk about that in your application, like references, citations, bibliography.

34:52

Whatever you think would be most helpful.

34:56

Third, is that your work plan should

35:00

consist of a set of logical and inter-related activities that are tied directly to addressing your challenge.

35:08

So, having a great justification is awesome.

35:13

But the Work Plan is really where the reviewers are looking for the details

35:17

And the set of activities that align, and get you from point A to point B, that get you to the results that you're hoping to achieve.

35:28

And fourth, is the results. Your project should generate measurable results that tie back to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

35:37

An application that has these four characteristics will stand out in the review process, and will have the best chance of success for funding.

35:50

So, as we head towards the end of our presentation, I just want to share with you a few places you might look for information.

35:57

I'll share a few tips before we close out.

36:00

Back to the IMLS website. You might want to do a search through our awarded grants listing to find out about the kinds of projects we've funded in the AAHC program.

36:11

You can search all the current years and past years, using a variety of criteria, such as different grant programs, by institution, by city and state.

36:25

And you'll get the basic information about each award, and a brief description of the project.

36:29

And this can be helpful as you're thinking about what kinds of things we can fund and you can seek funding for.

36:35

And I also encourage you to reach out to other grantees and ask them about their project.

36:42

Say, I see, you got a grant two years ago to do this collections digitization project.

36:48

We want to do the same thing.

36:50

How did it go? What worked for you? What didn't work for you?

36:53

Learning from your peers is a great way to build a stronger application.

37:02

We've also posted the Abstract, Narrative, and Schedule of Completion for a cross-section of successful applications from 2021.

37:10

And to find these examples, you go to the Sample Applications on the IMLS website and scroll down the page to the AAHC examples.

37:20

Looking at these proposals might help clarify your thinking about your own.

37:30

So, you may be curious what happens after the application deadline.

37:33

First, IMLS program staff review all applications for completeness and eligibility.

37:42

Applications are then sent out for peer review to museum professionals around the country.

37:47

Reviewers meet as a panel to discuss each application.

37:51

The reviewer scores and written comments are provided directly back to all applicants

37:55

so you'll see exactly what the reviewers said about your application, and that can help you be more competitive in a future cycle.

38:02

Or, if you've received funding, it might help you be better at implementing your project by incorporating some of the comments from the reviewers.

38:12

Now, these peer reviewers provide scores and comments based on the criteria outlined in the NOFO, which I showed you earlier, a few slides ago.

38:20

And the IMLS staff will also examine the budgets and the financials and look at your past performance if you were a grantee with IMLS before.

38:30

The IMLS Director is charged with the authority and responsibility to then make all final award decisions, and this happens in May.

38:41

Then in June, we will notify all applicants by e-mail of the award decisions, and provide you those scores and comments created by the reviewers and your project would begin July 1, 2022.

38:56

Just as a reminder,

38:58

this is also covered in our Choosing a Funding Opportunity webinar in more detail, that you do need to be registered using your DUNS number, in SAM dot gov.

39:08

You have to be in SAM dot gov. Anyone doing business with the federal government has to be registered there, and that allows you access to Grants dot gov.

39:18

And these registrations, in particular, for SAM, need to be kept updated every year.

39:24

So, even if you applied in a previous year, make sure that you've updated that.

39:29

It's a good thing to do this well in advance of the application deadline, so that you don't get caught with an expired registration and can't submit.

39:42

So, a few tips here, as we close out. Make sure you do some of your background research. We've given you some sources of where to get that information, and how to be prepared.

39:51

Follow the narrative outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, and even use those same headings to make it easy for reviewers to read and find the information they're seeking.

40:01

You want to avoid any generalities or acronyms. The people who are reviewing your application may not be totally familiar with your shorthand, so make it easy for them to understand what you mean.

40:15

Don't be afraid to ask a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit.

40:20

Ask them to act like a reviewer who's seeing this for the first time.

40:26

Make sure your application is complete. Make sure you've got all the required documents, as well as the conditionally required documents, if applicable.

40:34

And do your submission in Grants dot gov early, so you have time to correct any errors before the deadline.

40:43

So, again, you want to make sure you get to IMLS dot gov and look at the NOFO. Check your registrations in SAM dot gov and Grants dot gov.

40:51

Think about connecting with me, or my colleagues here, talk with a program staff member.

40:57

We do counseling calls all the time.

41:01

Prepare your application and make sure it's complete and submit before the deadline.

41:05

Which is November 15, 2021 at 11:59 PM. Again, here's our contact information for myself and Ashley Jones, who are the contact folks for this grant program.

41:19

I want to make sure you have our e-mail address and direct phone number.

41:23

Don't hesitate to call or e-mail us with questions or concerns.

41:27

Thank you very much for your time and attention today, and best of luck to you going forward.

41:32

Take care.