



# Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Phase Two Reviewer Handbook

## Office of Library Services Fiscal Year 2021

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## Welcome

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a peer reviewer for this year's Laura Bush Twenty First Century Librarian Program. We hope you will find this a rewarding experience and will draw satisfaction identifying projects that will support developing a diverse workforce of librarians to better meet the changing learning and information needs of the American public by enhancing the training and professional development of library and archives professionals; develop faculty and library leaders; and recruit, educate, and retain the next generation of library and archives professionals. We assure you that your contribution of time and expertise will be invaluable to IMLS and to the applicants who will receive your comments.

In this handbook, you will find the information you need to carry out your review, including information about the program, instructions for using eGMS Reach, and important reference material.

If you have any questions about this material or the processes described, please do not hesitate to contact your IMLS contact at any time.

Once again, thank you for the service you are about to render to libraries and communities throughout the nation.

IMLS Office of Library Services Staff

## Proposal and Review Process Timeline

Below is a summary of the process from application proposal submission through award announcements.

### Phase One

1. Applicants submit preliminary proposals to IMLS.
2. IMLS checks the preliminary proposals for eligibility and completeness.
3. IMLS identifies available reviewers with appropriate expertise and assigns reviewers to evaluate each preliminary proposal.
4. Preliminary proposal reviewers receive access to the proposals, evaluate them, and complete their comments and scores.
5. IMLS convenes preliminary proposal review panels for reviewers to discuss scores and the merits of the proposals.
6. IMLS staff aggregate reviewer comments and scores and make invitation decisions.

7. IMLS invites select applicants to submit full proposals. Whether or not they are invited to submit a full proposal, all applicants receive anonymized copies of their peer review comments and scores.

## Phase Two

8. Invited applicants submit full proposals to IMLS.

9. IMLS checks the full proposals for eligibility and completeness.

10. IMLS identifies available reviewers with appropriate expertise and assigns reviewers to evaluate each full proposal.

11. Full proposal reviewers receive access to the proposals, evaluate them, and complete their comments and scores.

12. IMLS staff members may hold phone calls with reviewers to discuss scores and the merits of the proposals, if needed.

13. IMLS staff members review the financial information of each potential grant and grantee, including a detailed check of the proposed budget.

14. Based on reviewer comments and scores, IMLS staff members recommend proposals for funding to the IMLS Director, who has the authority to make final funding decisions.

15. The IMLS Director makes all final funding decisions.

16. IMLS notifies all applicants whether or not they have received an award. With their notifications, all applicants receive anonymous copies of their reviews.

## Review Process

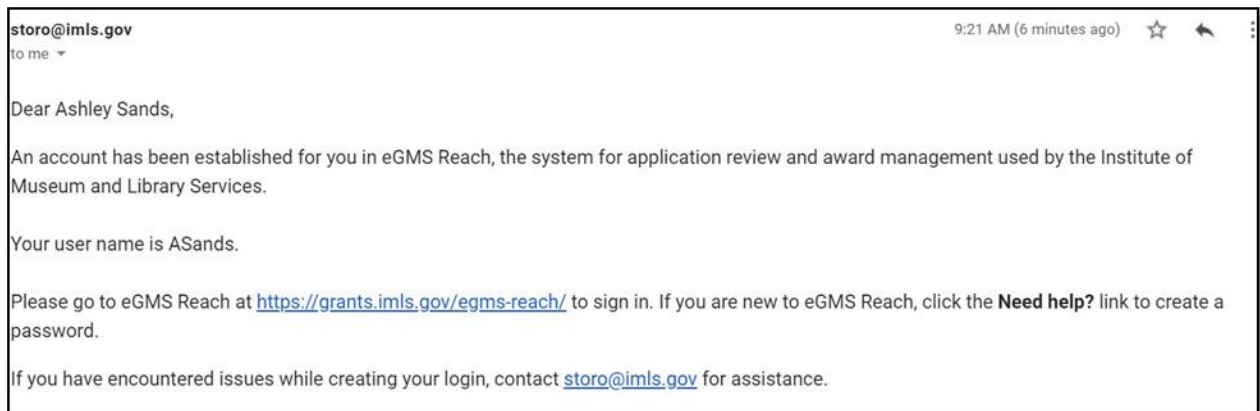
### IMLS Completeness and Eligibility Review

IMLS staff review the eligibility and completeness of applications before distributing them for peer review.

### Access to online portal

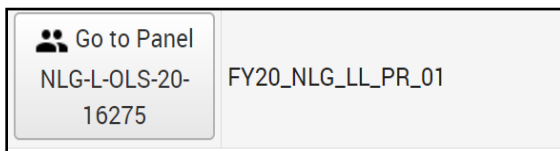
All review materials will be provided to you via the IMLS application review and grants management system maintained by IMLS. This system is called “eGMS Reach.” It is both the online portal that you will use to receive materials for review and the system where you will input your reviews.

In order to access the online portal for the first time, you will receive a separate email (see example below) from IMLS prompting you to create a username and password. If you do not receive the email, please check your junk folder. If you still do not see the message, contact [imls-librarygrants@imls.gov](mailto:imls-librarygrants@imls.gov). The email body will include instructions for how to setup your password on your first login.



Please alert IMLS staff immediately if you have not received your access credentials, if any materials are missing, you cannot open them, or if you encounter any other issues.

Upon receipt of the email, you should log into eGMS Reach. After you have completed the successful login, please ensure that you can access your reviewer materials. To do this, click on the “Go To Panel” button for your panel. Your panel will have a name that begins with “FY21\_LB21.”



The Panel section of eGMS Reach will provide you with the information you need to perform and submit your reviews. It begins with IMLS contact information for the panel, followed by your reviewer materials and then includes the applications you will be reviewing.

Your review process consists of three main activities:

- Preparing to begin peer review by reading available documentation
  - Quick Reference Guide
  - Reviewer Handbook (this document)
- Confirming no Conflicts of Interest (you must check the box to electronically sign the file)
- Reading and reviewing the applications

Using the online portal eGMS Reach, you will complete an evaluation form that includes written comments and asks you to assign one “Grade” or score for each application. More guidance on evaluating applications is provided in this document, but if any application seems to be missing pages or other information, please contact [imls-librarygrants@imls.gov](mailto:imls-librarygrants@imls.gov).

Please note that all reviews are due by **Thursday, May 27, 2021**.

## Required Conflict of Interest Statement

Before proceeding to the Applications Tab, you must affirm that you have reviewed and approved the conflict of interest statement located under your Personal Files and in the

Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest section of this document. Click on the paper icon to review Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest. Then click on the pen icon to affirm that you have reviewed this file and approved its contents.

Once you begin reviewing your assigned proposals, you may identify other conflicts. **Contact us immediately if you identify any potential conflicts of interest.**

## Confidentiality

The information contained in grant proposals is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions, project activities, or any other information contained in the proposals. Contact IMLS if you have any questions concerning a proposal. **Do not contact applicants directly or post on social media about your involvement in the process.**

## Managing records

Keep the proposals, a copy of your reviews, and any notes about the proposals in case there are questions from IMLS staff. Please destroy your review materials after awards are made.

## Glossary of terms

At times, the vocabulary used on the IMLS grants management portal, eGMS Reach, does not completely match the common IMLS vocabulary. We may use terms interchangeably throughout our instructions and in the online Reach interface. Here is a breakdown of common terms you will come across while completing your review:

**Panel:** The online space in which you will be completing the review process

**Coordinator:** IMLS staff member available for technical questions you may have

**Chair:** IMLS staff member available for content-based questions you may have

**Evaluation:** Your reviewer comments and feedback that are provided to applicants

**Applications:** Proposals from applicants that you will be reviewing

**Application Number:** The unique identifier assigned to each proposal

**Primary Person/Individual:** Project Director (PD) or Principal Investigator (PI)

**Primary Institution:** The lead applicant and fiscal agent for a project

**Grade:** The single score or number you will provide for each proposal

## Reading proposals

**For all questions about reviewing, either technical or programmatic, contact IMLS staff.**

Your thorough reading and understanding of each proposal will be key to providing insightful comments aligned with your overall grade or score for the proposal. Before you review the proposals, please ensure you are familiar with the program Notice Funding Opportunity (which can be found on our website, is linked below, and is available in your Reach portal), and reference it as needed throughout the review process.

Please review the [FY21 LB21 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#).

We estimate that it may take one to three hours to evaluate one proposal. First time reviewers may require additional time.

## Writing comments

**Write comments of 3-5 sentences minimum for each of the review question sections:**

- Broad Impact
- Current Significance
- Strategic Collaborations
- Demonstrated Expertise
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Sub-questions to each section are provided for your reference within the review form, though do not necessarily need to be answered individually.

Reviewer comments are used by IMLS staff to inform funding decisions and are provided to both successful and unsuccessful applicants to help improve their projects or future proposals. When drafting your comments:

- Present comments in a constructive and professional manner to help the applicant improve their proposal.
- Analyze the proposal in your comments; summarizing or paraphrasing the applicant's own words will not help the applicant.
- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Comments should be addressed to the applicants, not IMLS staff.

Characteristics of effective comments:	Characteristics of poor comments:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concise, easy to read and understand</li><li>• Specific to the individual proposal</li><li>• Reflect your experience and expertise</li><li>• Are realistic about the capacity of the institution</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make derogatory remarks</li><li>• Question an applicant's honesty or integrity</li><li>• Offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information</li><li>• Offer limited explanation or detail</li><li>• Reflect personal biases</li></ul>

## Assigning scores

After you have read, evaluated, and written comments for each proposal, please provide a single numeric grade or score from 1-5 (5 being the highest) that reflects your opinion of the proposal's overall quality and your recommendation of whether it should be funded or not. A score of 3 or above is typically considered "fund-able." (See the Guidance for Assigning Scores below for more information.)

To help applicants understand and benefit from your reviews, make sure that your scores accurately reflect your written comments.

## Entering scores and comments

You may enter your comments directly into the form or copy and paste them from a document you may have created. If you copy and paste your comments from another document, make sure to use plain text to avoid including any formatting code. Click on the Paste Plain Text icon to create a Paste Plain Text box. Enter your comments, and then click Paste.

Choose a score for the overall project from the radio buttons below the Results comment box.

Please note that while the eGMS Reach system is intended to auto-save every five minutes, we highly suggest hitting the save button at the bottom of the screen more frequently, and not solely relying on the auto-save feature. Please only have one application reviewer comment screen open at a given time, the system may lose your reviews if more than one application's reviews are open. Please also only use the plain text option (whether you are typing directly into the text boxes, or if you choose to copy/paste from your own software).

## Guidance for Assigning Scores

Fund	Excellent	5	The proposal exemplifies <b>all</b> of the indicators of successful projects (as described in the Notice of Funding Opportunity). <u>You recommend funding the proposal without reservation.</u>
	Very Good	4	The proposal demonstrates <b>most</b> of the indicators of successful projects but requires minor improvements. <u>You recommend funding the proposal.</u>
	Good	3	The proposal demonstrates <b>some</b> of the indicators of successful projects but requires some improvements. <u>You recommend funding the proposal, but acknowledge it could be more successful with some changes.</u>
Do not fund	Some Merit	2	The proposal <b>does not</b> demonstrate the indicators of successful projects. <u>You do not recommend the proposal for funding, but think the proposal could be strengthened for resubmission in a future grant cycle.</u>
	Inadequate	1	The proposal <b>does not</b> demonstrate the indicators of successful projects. <u>You do not recommend the proposal for funding or resubmission.</u>

## COVID-19

Applicants were asked to address any contingencies for how they will conduct their project activities if any COVID-related travel or capacity restrictions remain in place during the project period performance. Given that uncertainty remains over the progress of the pandemic recovery, you may include a review of the reasonableness of the contingency plan in your comments.



# Purpose and Scope of the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program

The Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (LB21) supports developing a diverse workforce of librarians to better meet the changing learning and information needs of the American public by: enhancing the training and professional development of library and archives professionals, developing faculty and library leaders, and recruiting, educating, and retaining the next generation of library and archives professionals.

Please review the [FY21 LB21 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#).

## IMLS Agency-level Goals

The mission of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. We provide leadership through research, policy development, and grantmaking. In FY2018-2022, each award under this program will support one of the following three goals and an associated objective from the IMLS strategic plan, Transforming Communities:

- **Promote Lifelong Learning:** IMLS supports learning and literacy for people of all ages through museums and libraries.
  - Early, digital, information, health, financial, media, civic, and other literacies
  - Cross-disciplinary and inquiry-based learning methods
  - Continuous learning for families and individuals with diverse backgrounds and needs
  - Distinctive role of museums and libraries as trusted sources of information
- **Build Capacity:** IMLS strengthens the capacity of museums and libraries to improve the wellbeing of their communities.
  - Recruitment, training, and development of library and museum workforces
  - Share and adopt best practices and innovations
  - Identify trends to help organizations make informed decisions
  - Serve as trusted spaces for community engagement and dialogue
- **Increase Public Access:** IMLS makes strategic investments that increase access to information, ideas, and networks through libraries and museums.
  - Support stewardship of museum and library collections
  - Tools, technology, and training enabling discovery and use of collections and resources by all
  - Policies and partnerships to address access barriers to collections, programs, and information
  - Increased access to knowledge through effective communications

These agency goals and objectives focus on achieving positive public outcomes for communities and individuals; supporting the unique role of museums and libraries in preserving and providing access to collections and content; and promoting library, museum, and information service policies that ensure access to information for all Americans.

IMLS places importance on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This may be reflected in a project in a wide range of ways, including efforts to serve individuals of diverse geographic, cultural,

and socioeconomic backgrounds; individuals with disabilities; individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills; individuals having difficulty using a library or museum; and underserved urban and rural communities, including children from families with incomes below the poverty line. This may also be reflected in efforts to recruit future professionals in the library or museum fields as well as strategies in building or enhancing access to collections and information.

## Indicators of Successful Projects

Indicators (characteristics) of successful projects in the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program are as follows:

- **Broad impact:** Successful projects address key needs, high priority gaps, and opportunities for the training and education of library and archives professionals. They should expand the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the workforce, demonstrate potential for far-reaching impact across size and complexity of institutions, and influence theory and practice.
- **Current significance:** Successful projects address a critical issue or opportunity for library and archives professionals and build on current strategic initiatives, knowledge, and agendas in these fields. They should be based on a clear understanding of existing work and the broader environments (e.g., economic, demographic, technological, social) in which library and archives professionals operate.
- **Strategic collaborations:** Successful projects involve key stakeholders and partners. These collaborations should establish or deepen strategic relationships and partnerships or engage intermediaries, both inside and outside of the library and archival fields. Collaborations strengthen expertise, leverage resources and relationships, expand development or implementation of services, and elevate the role of library and archives professionals.
- **Demonstrated expertise:** Successful projects employ a team possessing the necessary skills, experience, and knowledge to realize significant shifts across the field. They are based on a thorough understanding of the current state of—and gaps in—relevant theory and practice. They also demonstrate sound theoretical framing as well as a solid understanding of the realities of professional practice.
- **Diversity, equity, and inclusion:** Successful projects thoughtfully address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. They should strive to broaden participation in the library and archives profession through the recruitment, education, and retention of a diverse workforce. They strive to promote the successful participation of students and trainees from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds and empower library and archives professionals to provide inclusive services to diverse communities.

## Project Categories

The project categories are:

- Lifelong Learning
- Community Catalysts
- National Digital Infrastructures and Initiatives

**Lifelong Learning:** We are interested in proposals that will recruit, train, develop, and retain a diverse workforce of library and archives professionals; and have a significant impact on the capacity of library and archives professionals to support cross-disciplinary and inquiry-based methods of learning, foster attitudes of discovery, and cultivate skills such as critical thinking, innovation, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Work in this category may include exploring, piloting, scaling, or enhancing education and training programs, services, and partnerships focused on developing the skills and expertise of in-service or pre-service library and archives professionals in facilitating experiential and self-directed learning opportunities. Proposals should address substantial opportunities in library and archival practice and ensure that proposed activities exemplify library principles and values.

Proposals in this category may focus on enhancing professionals' capacity for:

- Fostering collaborations with formal or informal learning organizations to address issues of shared concern and incorporate promising practices from allied domains into library services. They should reinforce the role of library staff as facilitators of lifelong learning and leverage the distinct role of libraries as trusted sources of information. Possible partners and intermediaries might include, but are not limited to, staff at museums, school systems, universities, extension programs, youth-serving organizations, departments of correction, and workforce and economic development organizations.
- Exploring, piloting, scaling, and enhancing programming models and tools that support cross-disciplinary and inquiry-based learning opportunities in libraries for users of all ages. Topics addressed may include, but are not limited to, informal STEM or other types of participatory and inquiry-based learning; community or citizen science; community and expert narratives; early learning; workforce development; and digital, information, health, financial, media, civic, and other types of literacies.
- Investigating questions related to how library services impact user learning that are informed by current library and archival practice. They should develop mutually beneficial relationships between researchers and practitioners and communicate findings in ways that lead to demonstrable improvements to library services.
- Facilitating opportunities for continuous learning for families and individuals of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and needs, including, but not limited to, young children and their families or caregivers; tweens and teens; un- and under-employed adults looking to make career transitions or re-enter the workforce; veterans; immigrants and refugees; individuals with disabilities; English language learners; and senior citizens.

**Community Catalysts:** We are interested in proposals that will recruit, train, develop, and retain a diverse workforce of library and archives professionals, and have a significant impact on the capacity of library and archives professionals to contribute to the well-being of communities. Work in this category may include exploring, piloting, scaling, or enhancing educational or training programs related to professionals' skills and expertise in strengthening civic and cultural engagement, fostering community health, promoting digital inclusion, increasing equity and access, supporting economic vitality, or decreasing social isolation. Proposals should address substantial opportunities in library and archival practice and ensure that the proposed outcomes exemplify library principles and values.

Proposals in this category may focus on expanding professionals' capacity for:

- Identifying community opportunities, addressing community needs, providing community-based programs, and enhancing services that support and engage the community by leveraging the distinct role of libraries as trusted spaces for community engagement, dialogue, and information.
- Integrating into library theory and practice approaches and techniques including, but not limited to, design thinking, data analytics, impact assessment, leadership development, organizational change, asset mapping, and collective impact (see [IMLS Community Catalyst](#) and [Community Salute Initiatives](#)).
- Developing, implementing, assessing, and scaling programs, services, tools, and partnership models focused on enhancing opportunities, community networks, and wellbeing in communities. Topics may include, but are not limited to, workforce and economic development; financial, health, or legal services; and increasing equity and access. Some factors to consider may be social and economic conditions, types of anchor institutions, infrastructure, transportation, and geographic and physical barriers.
- Exploring widespread community challenges and opportunities for growth and collaboration that are informed by or build on current library and archival practice and feature mutually beneficial relationships between researchers and practitioners. Findings should be communicated in ways that could lead to demonstrable improvements in library services, sustained community engagement, and increased reach to new and existing library and archives users and underserved audiences.

#### **National Digital Infrastructures and Initiatives:**

We are interested in proposals that will recruit, train, develop, and retain a diverse workforce of library and archives professionals; and have a significant impact on the capacity of library and archives professionals to provide access to diverse digital content, collections, and services to a wide range of users. Work in this category may include exploring, piloting, scaling, or enhancing educational or training programs related to professionals' skills and expertise in open source digital library infrastructures, efforts to engage communities with digital library content and collections, and other activities related to leveraging shared tools and services. This work may also involve assessing opportunities for and impact of investments in education and training to support digital libraries and archives. Proposals should address substantial opportunities in library and archival practice and ensure that the proposed outcomes exemplify library principles and values. Applicants are encouraged to reference [National Digital Infrastructures and Initiatives: A Report on the 2017 NDP at Three Forum](#) (PDF 139KB) when developing their proposal.

Proposals in this category may focus on expanding professionals' capacity for:

- Designing, developing, implementing, and maintaining digital tools and services.
- Providing access to digital content and collections at scale for users of all interests and skill levels.
- Assessing barriers to the adoption of tools and services and increasing the accessibility of content and collections to a wide range of users.
- Integrating shared resources and collaborative networks for public access to and preservation of digital library content and collections at institutions of all types and sizes.

- Investigating the sustainability, interoperability, and long-term value and impact of digital content and collections to diverse and evolving user communities.
- Fostering community memory and identity through the development, enhancement, and long-term maintenance of digital collections and community collaborations.
- Curating new or complex content types or digital formats.
- Enabling the ethical stewardship of diverse or culturally sensitive digital content and collections.
- Enhancing information literacy and digital inclusion efforts through expanded broadband connectivity, data privacy and security, or civic data use.
- Engaging communities in the co-creation, interpretation, and stewardship of digital library content and collections, while keeping in mind broader applicability to other contexts and future sustainability.

## Project Types

The Project Types are:

- Pre-Professional
- Master's-level
- Doctoral-level
- Early Career Development
- Continuing Education

**Pre-Professional** proposals support the development of a diverse workforce in library and information science by introducing middle school, high school, community college, or undergraduate students to careers in library and information science. Mentorship, cohort-building, service learning, internships, or part-time employment may be key components of projects in this category.

**Master's-level** proposals educate the next generation of library and archives leaders to meet the evolving needs of the profession and society. Proposals in this category support the recruitment, instruction, and formal educational experiences of Master's students in graduate departments of library and information science and graduate departments that provide school library media certification programs.

**Doctoral-level** proposals in library and information science develop library and archives leaders to assume positions as managers, administrators, researchers, or faculty to meet the evolving needs of the profession and society

**Early Career Development** proposals support the research of untenured, tenure-track library and information science faculty, furthering the faculty member's long-term research trajectory and professional development.

**Continuing Education** proposals aim to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of library and archives professionals through formal and informal programs such as: post-Master's programs, residencies, enhanced work experiences, blended learning opportunities including mentorships, online learning modules, developing communities of practice, and other training programs.

## Funding Categories

The funding categories are:

- Planning
- National Forum
- Project
- Research in Service to Practice

**Planning Grants** allow project teams to perform exploratory activities, such as analyzing needs and feasibility; solidifying partnerships; developing project work plans; or developing prototypes, or proofs of concept, and pilot studies. Methods used to assess the outcomes should be appropriate to the planning category. Applications are expected to provide a basic framework for planning activities that have the potential to lead to a future project. The period of performance for a Planning Grant is one to two years.

**National Forum Grants** provide the opportunity to convene qualified experts and key stakeholders, including those from adjacent fields as appropriate, to help explore current or emerging issues or opportunities that are important to professional development and education-related issues in libraries and archives across the nation. National Forum Grants may consist of one or more meetings and related activities. Recipients are expected to produce reports or other deliverables for wide dissemination and are encouraged to consider leveraging technology to allow broad participation, such as virtual meetings or live-streaming. Additional mechanisms for engaging stakeholders and building awareness of the findings are encouraged. The period of performance for a National Forum Grant is one to two years.

**Project Grants** support recruiting and educating the next generation of library and archives professionals, developing faculty and library leaders, and assisting in the professional development of library and archives staff who serve the nation. Proposals should provide clear evidence of broad impact; current significance; strategic collaborations; demonstrated expertise; and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Projects may further pilot, test scalability or feasibility, expand existing products or services into new audiences or contexts, or enhance existing projects or initiatives. Proposals should not simply sustain current activities or represent incremental improvements in existing programs. Applicants should design their proposed work to ensure that new practices have the potential to be easily adoptable, sustainable, and widely implementable across the field. Proposals should feature methods of evaluation appropriate to the project's phase of maturity. The period of performance for a Project Grant is one to three years. Project Grants that select the Doctoral-level project type are for periods of one to four years.

**Research in Service to Practice Grants** involve the investigation of key questions relevant to library or archival professional practice. These proposals should build on prior empirical, theoretical, or exploratory work in libraries and archives or other disciplines (as they relate to libraries or library services). Proposals must include clearly articulated research questions and feature appropriate methods, including relevant theoretical or conceptual approaches, data collection, and analysis. Findings and their implications for library and archival practice should be shared broadly throughout the grant period, rather than exclusively at the end of

the project. Dissemination activities should not be limited to publishing journal articles and presenting at academic conferences. Research projects should not be designed with a deterministic agenda or predetermined outcomes. Proposals focused on evaluation are not appropriate for the Research in Service to Practice Grants category and should be submitted to the Project Grants category above. The period of performance for a Research in Service to Practice Grant is one to three years.

## Guidance for Research Applications

Please note that research and information collection is subject to applicable law, including but not limited to 45 C.F.R. pt. 46 (Protection of Human Subjects); see also the IMLS Assurances and Certifications.

An effective research application should answer the following questions in the project narrative.

**What are the specific research questions the project will attempt to answer?** Applicants should list the question or questions that will drive their proposed activities. Research questions should be clear and concise.

**What is their theoretical framing?** What are the concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and/or theories that support and inform the research and guide the approach to data collection and analysis?

**What is the relevance of their proposed research for current practice?** How does their proposed work build on existing projects or efforts, including those funded by IMLS?

**What research methods will they use to conduct the research?** Why are they the most appropriate for addressing the question(s) at hand? Methods must be replicable and based on current practices.

**What type of data will they gather?** The applicant should detail the methods for collecting information along with any potential privacy or human subjects concerns that may arise. As noted above, research and information collection is subject to applicable law, including but not limited to privacy requirements and 45 C.F.R. pt. 46 (Protection of Human Subjects), see also the IMLS Assurances and Certifications.

**How will the applicant analyze and use the data? How will information be reported?**

**How will the applicant manage the research data and make it available for future use (as applicable)?** IMLS expects applicants to deposit data resulting from IMLS-funded research in a broadly accessible repository that allows the public to use the data without charge. The data should be deposited in a machine-readable, non-proprietary digital format to maximize search, retrieval, and analysis.

## Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

As a reviewer for IMLS, you perform a vital role in ensuring the integrity of IMLS's peer review process and must carry out your duties in accordance with government ethics rules. Before you evaluate applications, we ask that you review the following **General Principles of Ethical Conduct** and **Summary of the Conflict of Interest Laws**. You will be asked to certify compliance with the IMLS Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement and Certification. IMLS allocates up to one hour of your reviewer time for you to consider these materials.

If, at any time in the course of performing your duties at IMLS, you believe you may have a conflict of interest, please contact the IMLS staff member coordinating your review process. Other questions about the ethics rules and responsibilities may be directed to IMLS's Designated Agency Ethics Official at [ethics@imls.gov](mailto:ethics@imls.gov); (202) 653-4787; 955 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Suite 4000, Washington, DC 20024.

### General Principles of Ethical Conduct

1. Public service is a public trust, requiring you to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
2. You shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
3. You shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. You shall not, except pursuant to such reasonable exceptions as are provided by regulation, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by IMLS, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the your duties.
5. You shall put forth honest effort in the performance of your duties.
6. You shall make no unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Government.
7. You shall not use public office for private gain.
8. You shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
9. You shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.
10. You shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.
11. You shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
12. You shall satisfy in good faith your obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those – such as Federal, State, or local taxes – that are imposed by law.
13. You shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.



14. You shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that you are violating the law or the ethical standards.

### Summary of Conflict of Interest Laws

**18 U.S.C. § 201** – Prohibits you from acceptance of bribes or gratuities to influence Government actions.

**18 U.S.C. § 203** – Prohibits you from accepting compensation for representational activities involving certain matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

**18 U.S.C. § 205** – Prohibits you from certain involvement in claims against the United States or representing another before the Government in matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

**18 U.S.C. § 207** – Imposes certain restrictions on you related to your activities after Government service.

**18 U.S.C. § 208** – Prohibits you from participating in certain Government matters affecting your own financial interests or the interests of your spouse, minor child, general partner, or organization in which you are serving as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee.

**18 U.S.C. § 209** – Prohibits you from being paid by someone other than the United States for doing their official Government duties.

### Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a reviewer or panelist for IMLS, 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 for future employment.

A present financial interest is not the only basis for conflict of interest. Through prior association as an employee or officer, you may have gained knowledge of the applicant that would preclude objective review of its application. Past employment (generally more than five years) does not by itself disqualify a reviewer so long as the circumstances of your association permit you to perform an objective review of the application. If you believe you may have a conflict of interest with any application assigned to you for review, please notify us immediately.

You may still serve as a reviewer even if your institution is an applicant in this grant cycle or you were involved in an application submitted in this grant cycle, as long as you do not review any application submitted by your own institution or any application in which you were involved.

However, if you believe that these or any other existing circumstances may compromise your objectivity as a reviewer, please notify us immediately.

If an application presents no conflict of interest at the time you review it, a conflict of

interest may still develop later on. Once you have reviewed an application, you should never represent the applicant in dealings with IMLS or another Federal agency concerning the application, or any grant that may result from it.

It is not appropriate, for your purposes or for the purposes of the institutions or organizations you represent, for you to make specific use of confidential information derived from individual applications that you read while you were serving as an IMLS reviewer. In addition, pending applications are confidential. Accordingly, you must obtain approval from IMLS before sharing any proposal information with anyone, whether for the purpose of obtaining expert advice on technical aspects of an application or for any reason.

If you have any questions regarding conflict of interest, either in relation to a specific application or in general, please contact the IMLS staff member who is coordinating the review process.

## Protecting Sensitive Data at IMLS

IMLS is committed to protecting your private, sensitive information and employs the following physical and technical safeguards when collecting museum program reviewer and panelist information:

1. **Email Security.** IMLS email is hosted on a cloud computing infrastructure which has been reviewed and approved as meeting the security requirements of the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP). FedRAMP is a government-wide standardized program for security assessment, authorization, and monitoring of cloud products and services. FedRAMP requirements are based on (and surpass) the Security and Privacy Controls for Federal Information Systems and Organizations developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. FedRAMP's additional security controls address the unique elements of cloud computing to ensure all federal data is secure in cloud environments.
2. **Secure File Transmission.** IMLS Secure File Upload uses Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS), a transmission protocol that verifies the identity of a website or web service for a connecting client and encrypts nearly all information sent between the website or service and the user. HTTPS is designed to prevent this information from being read or changed while in transit. HTTPS is a combination of HTTP and Transport Layer Security (TLS). TLS is a network protocol that establishes an encrypted connection to an authenticated peer over an untrusted network.
3. **Secure File Storage.** IMLS will only store secure files and any related passwords as long as necessary to complete the relevant transaction or process. A physical copy of personally identifiable information (PII) may be printed at IMLS for business use, after which the copy is secured in a locked location and destroyed after the business use ceases.
4. **Access Controls.** IMLS employs access controls to restrict access to sensitive information that is stored electronically. Access to IMLS files is restricted to authorized IMLS staff, and sensitive data is stored in folders that can only be accessed by a restricted set of

authorized users. Files containing sensitive information are password-protected, providing an additional layer of security.

5. **Records Policies.** IMLS financial transaction records are subject to the agency's record retention policy and disposed of in accordance with the General Services Administration's General Records Schedule.