



IMLS National Medal for Museum and Library Service Nominee Information

June 2024



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History of the Medals Program

- The Medals program has been in existence for 30 years.
- It is the nation's highest honor for museums and libraries that make significant and exceptional contributions to their communities.
- Over 200 organizations have received the Medal.
- <https://www.ims.gov/our-work/national-medals/national-medal-winners>



The National Medal for Museum and Library Service program has been in existence for 30 years. In that time, over 200 libraries and museums have received the award.

To learn more about the museums and libraries who have previously been selected to receive a National Medal since 2000, please refer to the link in the slide above.



Medals Program Overview

- The National Medals program recognizes outstanding libraries and museums of all types and sizes that deeply impact their communities by, for example:
 - fostering a lifelong passion for learning for all people, nourishing curiosity and imagination from early childhood through adulthood, for people of all abilities and needs;
 - providing access to information by building a literate, well-informed community and advancing digital capacity, focusing on digital inclusion and access to digital and informational resources, including e-books and materials to help address workforce development and public health;
 - enriching the lives of community members by being trusted community spaces for convening, connection, and conversation; enlightenment and shared thoughts and opinions; and preserving natural and cultural heritage and community memory; and
 - catalyzing community connections, collaborations and/or coalitions to advance community goals.

The program recognizes museums and libraries that deeply impact their communities.



Eligibility Requirements for Museums

To qualify as a “museum,” an organization must:

- Be a unit of State or local government or be a private, nonprofit organization that has tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code;
- Be located within the United States and its territories;
- Use a professional staff;
- Be organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes;
- Own or use tangible objects, either animate or inanimate;
- Care for these objects; AND
- Exhibit these objects to the general public on a regular basis through facilities that it owns or operates (generally open to the public for at least 120 days a year).

In general, these types of museums are eligible to apply to the Medals program: Aquariums, Arboretums/Botanical Gardens, Art Museums, Children’s/Youth Museums, General Museums, Historic Houses/Sites, History Museums, Natural History Museums, Anthropology Museums, Nature Centers, Planetariums, Science/Technology Museums, Specialized Museums, and Zoos.

Previous museum medal recipients may be nominated again after ten years.



Eligibility Requirements for Libraries

To qualify as a “library,” an organization must:

- Be one of the following: Academic and Research Libraries/Archives, Digital Libraries, Library Associations, Library Consortia, Public Libraries, Research Libraries/Archives that make information available to the public and that are not an integral part of an institution of higher learning, Public School Libraries, Tribal Libraries, and Private or Special Libraries that are considered libraries as determined by the State in which they are located;
- Be a unit of State or local government or be a private, nonprofit organization that has tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code; AND
- Be located within the United States and its territories.

As stated in the previous slide about museums, library medal recipients may be nominated again after ten years.

Nomination Process

Who may nominate a library or museum for the National Medal?

Anyone, including the organization's employees, board members, members of its community, and elected officials, may nominate a museum or library for this honor.

What does the organization being nominated need to do?

An organization that is nominated either by an outside nominator or by self-nomination **MUST** complete the Nomination Form to be considered.



Anyone can nominate a library or museum for the National Medal. If someone outside the organization wants to make a nomination, they should notify the museum or library directly and ask them to complete and submit the Nomination Form.

Regardless of who initiates the nomination, the museum and library **MUST** still complete the nomination form on the IMLS website. Organizations who fail to complete the form and include all required documentation will **NOT** be considered for a National Medal.

Nomination Form

- The National Medals nomination form can be accessed at this link:
https://imls.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3rwkjGBmWbTUX6S
- A reference copy of all questions is available at this link: <https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2024-06/fy25-national-medals-nomination-form-reference.pdf>
- This form must be completed by the nominated organization

The nomination form is entirely online and available on the IMLS website. It can be accessed through the link referenced in this slide. You will be prompted to upload your separate narrative and support letter files at the end of the form, so you should gather all the materials you need before starting the submission. There is a reference copy of all questions available to help you plan your responses.

This form must be completed by the nominated organization.



Nomination Form Components

- There are three components of the National Medals nomination form. They are:
 - A) Organizational Information
 - B) Organizational Overview and Narrative
 - C) Letters of Support

The first component collects information about the organization, as a whole. It includes the organization's legal name, address, UEI number, TIN/EIN number, organization type, staff information, contact information, and questions concerning the organization's financial situation and operating expenses.

The next component asks for the nominating organization to provide an overview of your organization's history, mission or statement of purpose. It also asks you to explain why you believe your organization deserves to win the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. This section also includes the nomination narrative. It has 4 sections, and they are: Community and Community Needs; Programs and Services; Impact; and Financial Sustainability.

It's important to note that section B has page limits, so you need to plan well to cover all the relevant information that is being requested. You should upload a single document to cover these narrative sections.

The final component is where you upload your letters of support.

Nomination Narrative

- There are four sections to the nomination narrative. They are:
 - 1) Community and Community Needs
 - 2) Programs and Services
 - 3) Impact
 - 4) Financial Sustainability

The nomination narrative is the most important part of the nomination form, so it's important to get this right. A common question IMLS staff receives from nominees is whether we can review draft narratives. Unfortunately, we do not review drafts nominations; we simply do not have the staff capacity to offer that service to all potential nominees.

The first section, Community and Community Needs, is where you will describe your community, including its demographics; here you will describe your community's major needs and how you identified them.

The next section, Programs and Services, is where you will describe the specific programs, services, and partnerships that have been developed to address one or more of those needs identified in the previous section. It also asks how you work with the community, how these efforts inform strategy and practice across the institution, and how you serve community members of all abilities.

The third section is Impact. It is here where you will describe the impact of your organization's programs and services on the identified community needs. You'll want to be specific, using qualitative, quantitative, or both types of descriptors as appropriate. This section also asks how your organization used these data to inform continuing and/or new programs and services.

The final section, Financial Sustainability, is where you have an opportunity to list your organization's three primary sources of revenue, and where you can describe how your organization financially supports the programs and services discussed in the previous sections. You can also describe your organization's funding model and if it is sustainable to continue to enable your programs and services.



Letters of Support

- Letters of Support are required for this program
- Up to three non-Congressional letters of support can be submitted
 - Recommend that the letters come from different segments of the broader community served by the organization and from individuals who have either witnessed or experienced first-hand a particular program or service
- Congressional letters of support are NOT required, but are accepted and must be emailed to nationalmedals@imls.gov

Letters of support are a vital element and a great way to convey your organization's impact on your communities. You must submit at least one letter of support, and a maximum of three non-Congressional letters of support can be submitted. These letters should come from community members who have direct knowledge of the nominated organization's community service and the particular programs identified in the nomination. We recommend that the letters come from different segments of the broader community served by the organization and from individuals who have either witnessed or experienced first-hand a particular program or service. Based upon previous years, nominations that included powerful, poignant, genuine letters of support did the best job of supporting the nomination. Those that included letters from a board member or the local chamber of commerce, or letters that had no reference to the programs and services identified in the narrative tended to do poorly.

Remember, your organization's programs and services should make significant and exceptional contributions to your communities. Your letters of support can convey these contributions in a very personal and meaningful way.

In addition to the three letters of support, letters from members of Congress are welcome. These Congressional letters must be emailed to nationalmedals@imls.gov. All letters should be addressed to the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.



Nomination Form Attachments

- Gather all your information before beginning the online submission
- Use the following naming conventions for uploaded attachments:
 - YourOrganizationName_Narrative
 - YourOrganizationName_Letter1
 - YourOrganizationName_Letter2
 - YourOrganizationName_Letter3

You should gather all your institution's information, including the narrative and letter attachments, before beginning the online submission. It needs to be completed in a single session, but you can use the reference copy of all questions to prepare your materials ahead of time. All your file names should begin with the name of your organization for uniformity, followed by the designations for "narrative," "letter 1," etc.



Important Dates and Numbers

All nomination materials must be submitted by 11:59 pm EST on Friday, September 6, 2024

All National Medal nominees will be notified of their status in the spring of 2025



Nominations are due by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on September 6, 2024. The deadline is non-negotiable, so it's a good idea to start the process early, and if possible, submit early.

The Medals winners will be announced in the Spring of 2025.

Nomination Tips

- Start the process early
- Focus on the narrative questions in the nomination form; avoid including extraneous information
- Gather meaningful letters of support
- Have someone review your responses prior to submitting the nomination
- Reach out to your IMLS contacts:
<https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/national-medal-museum-and-library-service>

As we've already mentioned, we encourage you to start the nomination process early. It's important to be reflective about what is being asked of you in the nomination form and to bring all the relevant people at your organization together in a common voice. The nomination process should not be done in a vacuum, and those nominations that tend to do well are those that involve people throughout the museum or library. Starting early allows you to meet with the people who work directly in your community and those creating and implementing the programs and services that may be the focus of your nomination. Remember, the National Medal recognizes the entirety of a museum or library; not a single department, or single program/exhibition, so consider the breadth of the services and impact your whole organization provides to your communities.

We strongly encourage you to respond to all sections of the narrative – remember, there are 4 sections – and to answer each question as stated. Nominations that include unstructured and rambling narrative responses tend not to do well.

As covered a few slides back, it is very important to submit strong letters of support which should link to the narrative in some meaningful way. A heartfelt letter from someone who has directly benefited from the community services and programs that your organization provides can be a game changer.

Another tip is to have someone not intimately familiar with your organization's programs and services, and the National Medals program, read the nomination components before submitting the form. If your nomination responses make sense to your neighbor or reading club member, in terms of the Medals program goals, then you probably did a good job clearly articulating your responses.

Finally, there are dedicated staff at IMLS who are ready to answer any questions you may have. Contact information will be available in an upcoming slide, and the same information can be found on the National Medals landing page on the IMLS website at the link listed on this slide.



Medal Nomination Review Process

How are the recipients of the National Medal selected?

The Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, with the advice of the National Museum and Library Services Board, selects the recipients of the National Medals. In addition to the Medal, IMLS may provide a monetary award.

How many finalists and Medalists will be selected?

Approximately fifteen libraries and fifteen museums will be selected as finalists, for a total of thirty. From these finalists, a minimum of three museums and three libraries will then be selected to receive National Medals.

So, what happens after the deadline passes and all of the nominations have been received? All nominations from eligible museums and libraries that are complete and submitted on or before the deadline will be reviewed by IMLS staff. The Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, with the advice of the National Museum and Library Services Board, selects the recipients of the National Medals.

One additional note, approximately fifteen libraries and fifteen museums will be chosen as finalists, for a total of thirty. From these finalists, a minimum of three museums and three libraries will then be selected to receive National Medals.



Online Information and Resources

- National Medals landing page:
<https://www.ims.gov/grants/available/national-medal-museum-and-library-service>
- Medals Nomination Form:
https://ims.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3rwkjGBmWbTUX6S
- Reference copy of all questions:
<https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/2024-06/fy25-national-medals-nomination-form-reference.pdf>
- Medals blog posts, videos, publications, etc.
<https://www.ims.gov/our-work/national-medal-museum-and-library-service>

We would also like to share some links as a handy reference for information about the National Medals program. The first link takes you to the National Medals landing page; the second link takes you directly to the online nomination form, with a reference copy of all questions below that; and the last link takes you to a page with lots of information from past award cycles, including blog posts, videos, publications, press releases, and other information that may be of interest. You may want to consider bookmarking these links for easy access.



IMLS Staff Contacts

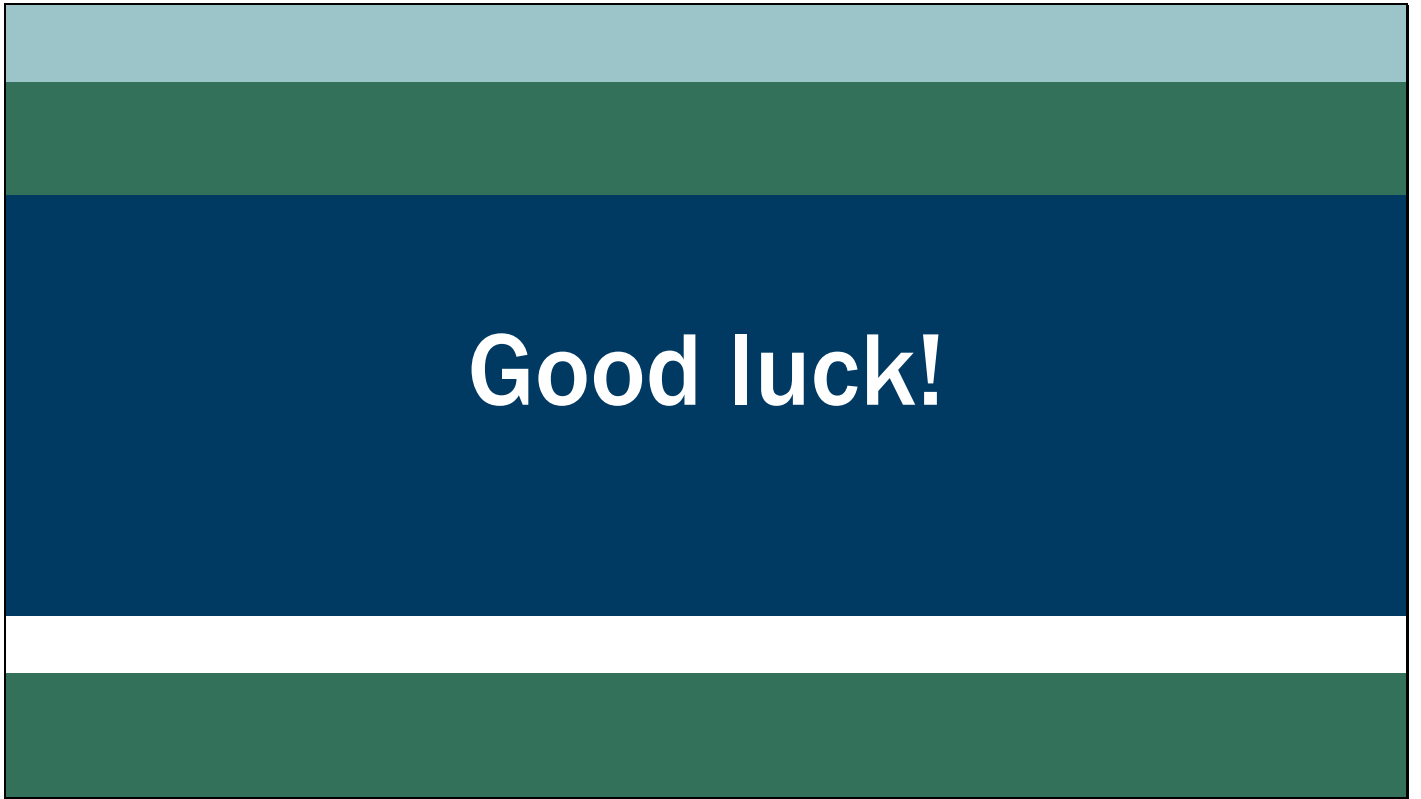
For questions about the nomination process, please contact:

Libraries: Teri DeVoe at tdevoe@imls.gov

Museums: Mark Feitl at mfeitl@imls.gov

For all other questions: nationalmedals@imls.gov

Once again, we want to share with you the IMLS staff contacts. Feel free to reach out to us with any questions you may have about the program or the nomination process.



We look forward to hearing from you with any questions over the next few weeks, and of course to seeing your nomination on or before September 6, 2024!

Credit

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