

Fiscal Year 2025



Panel Reviewer Handbook

21st Century Museum Professionals Program

Office of Museum Services

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Welcome!

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a peer reviewer for this year's 21st Century Museum Professionals grant program. We hope you find this to be a rewarding experience and draw satisfaction from helping museums across the country create engaging learning environments, address the needs of their communities, and serve as trusted stewards of the collections they hold in trust for the public. 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 panel review, including information about the program, tips for writing effective comments, and three appendices with important reference material.

Additional guidance for peer reviewers includes:

- [Webinar for Potential Museum Reviewers](#)
- [Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest](#) (PDF, 88 KB)
- [How to Use Login.gov to Access eGMS Reach](#) (PDF, 1.3 MB)
- [How to Review Applications in eGMS Reach](#) (PDF, 1.1 MB)

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

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

21st Century Museum Professionals Program Overview

Executive Summary

The 21st Century Museum Professionals (21MP) program supports projects that offer professional development to the current museum workforce, train and recruit future museum professionals, and identify and share effective practices in museum workforce education and training.

This program's purpose is to develop and enhance a diverse workforce of museum professionals to anticipate and serve the needs of museums and their local communities. Critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity are essential 21st century skills that are vital to success in a global economy. Museums are trusted institutions that are well equipped to build those skills.

IMLS recognizes the important role of strong local and regional networks in providing peer-to-peer learning, training, and mentoring opportunities for the museum workforce. Partnerships among museums, museum-serving organizations, and institutions of higher education are vital to expanding career pathways for broad groups of museum professionals throughout a city, county, state, region, or the nation. The 21MP Program encourages applications from museum associations, museum studies programs at institutions of higher education, and museums that serve as essential parts of the professional learning and training environment.

All proposed projects should follow a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing a key need or challenge and generate measurable results.

We expect 21MP projects to:

- ✓ reflect a thorough understanding of relevant theory and effective practice in workforce training and professional development for the museum field;
- ✓ involve partnerships that build career pathways and strengthen professional networks beyond a single institution;
- ✓ employ inclusive and equitable recruitment and selection strategies to reach your primary audience; and
- ✓ engage museum staff, leadership, or volunteers at any stage of career development.

21MP Program Goals and Objectives

Reflecting IMLS's agency-level goals, 21MP has two program goals and 2-3 objectives associated with each goal. Each applicant should align their proposed project with one of these two goals and one of the associated objectives. Program goal and objective choices should be identified clearly in the Project Justification section of the Narrative and align with the grant program goal and objective selected by the applicant on the IMLS Museum Program Information Form.

21MP Program Goal 1: Support the professional development of the current museum workforce.

Objective 1.1

Develop new or enhanced professional development and training programs for the museum workforce.

Objective 1.2

Support assessment and evaluation of training and professional development programs to identify and share effective practice.

21MP Program Goal 2: Recruit and train future museum professionals.

Objective 2.1

Expand pathways into the museum field by adapting higher education programs to be more responsive to the needs of the 21st century museum workforce.

Objective 2.2

Recruit future museum professionals from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds through paid internships, mentoring, and fellowship opportunities.

Objective 2.3

Support assessments and evaluation of recruitment, training, and higher education programs to identify and share effective practices.

Funding Amounts

Amount of Individual Awards	\$100,000 - \$500,000
Cost Share Requirement	1:1
Period of Performance	1 to 3 years

Step-by-Step Instructions for Reviewers

At this stage, IMLS has screened applications only for institutional eligibility and application completeness. We are counting on you to determine how good a job each applicant does in:

- ✓ meeting the overall purpose of the 21MP grant program,
- ✓ aligning with specific goal and objective that they selected, and
- ✓ presenting a clear justification for the project, detailing the project workplan, and articulating the project results.

As you begin the process, you need to set aside enough time to read each application, understand the review criteria, and write your evaluation. The amount of time it takes to complete this work may vary significantly depending on the complexity of the application and your familiarity with the review process. Reviewers may spend from 1 to 3 hours on each application and often need to reread an application before completing their review.

Step 1: Sign in to eGMS Reach

eGMS Reach is IMLS's platform that you will use to access and review applications. To access eGMS Reach, users are required to have an account through [Login.gov](https://login.gov) to securely access information. You will receive an email with the subject line "eGMS Reach Account Information," that includes a link to the reviewer portal. If you do not receive such an email, please check your junk folder. If you still do not see the email, contact imls-museumreviewers@imls.gov.

Once you have the email, please visit <https://grants.imls.gov/Reach/> and follow the instructions located in the [How to Use Login.gov to Access eGMS Reach](#) Job Aid to create a Login.gov account or link your email to an existing Login.gov account.

Instructions for navigating eGMS Reach are available in the [How to Review Applications in eGMS Reach](#) Job Aid, which is accessible on the IMLS website here: <https://imls.gov/grants/peer-review/reviewer-resources/museum-reviewer-resources>

Visit the [Federal Service Desk](#) or call 1-866-606-8220 for questions about registering or renewing your registration with Login.gov. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time.

Step 2: Consider Panel Review Criteria and Read Applications

We recommend that you begin by reviewing the [FY 2025 21st Century Museum Professionals Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) to which applicants have responded in creating their applications. This document is also available in the Shared Files for all Panel Participants section of the Files and Forms tab in eGMS Reach. Then, read the applications, keeping in mind the panel review criteria listed below. You will not need to reference each bullet point in your comments, but these questions should guide your thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of each application.

Panel Review Criteria

Project Justification

Does the project meet the purpose of the 21MP notice of funding opportunity to develop and enhance a diverse workforce of museum professionals to anticipate and serve the needs of museums and their local communities?

- How well does the proposal align with the selected 21MP program goal and associated objective?
- How well has the applicant used relevant data and other evidence to describe the need, problem, or challenge to be addressed?
- Has the applicant appropriately defined the primary audience and beneficiaries, as applicable, for this work?
- Have the primary audience and other project stakeholders been appropriately involved in planning the project?
- Does the project address current needs of the museum workforce and have the potential to build career pathways and strengthen professional networks beyond a single institution?

Project Work Plan

Is the project poised for successful implementation?

- Are the proposed activities informed by relevant theory and effective practice in workforce training and professional development?
- Do the identified staff, partners, consultants, and service providers have the experience and skills necessary to successfully complete the work?
- Are the time, financial, personnel, and other identified resources appropriate for the scope and scale of the project?
- Will the recruitment and selection process employ inclusive and equitable strategies to reach the primary audience?
- Are the goals, assumptions, and risks clearly stated?
- If present, does the Digital Products Plan reflect appropriate practices and standards for creating and managing the types of digital products proposed?

- Will the proposed methods for tracking the project's progress allow course adjustments when necessary?
- Will the proposed methods for tracking the project's progress provide reliable and measurable information about the project results?

Project Results

If funded, will the project achieve its intended results?

- Are the project's intended results clearly articulated, realistic, meaningful, and linked to the need, problem, or challenge addressed by the project?
- Is the plan to effect meaningful change in knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes solidly grounded and appropriately structured?
- Will the products created by the project be made available and accessible to the primary audience?
- Is the plan to sustain the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance reasonable and practical?

Step 3: Draft Comments

For each application you review, we ask you to write a constructive and substantive comment for each of the panel review criteria: Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results. All three areas have equal weight and are equally important in identifying the overall strengths and weaknesses of an application.

You may wish to prepare your comments in a separate document for later copying and pasting into the eGMS Reach evaluation form.

When drafting your comments...

- Take all the review criteria questions for each section into consideration. It is not necessary to restate the review criteria questions in your comments.
- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Judge the application on its own merits, and do not base your evaluation on any prior knowledge of an institution.
- Make sure your comments justify the scores you provide. A highly complimentary comment does not remove the sting of a low score, and a negative comment does not even out a high one. Comments and scores must complement each other and make sense as a whole.

Characteristics of effective and poor panel reviewer comments

Effective Comments...	Poor Comments...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are presented in a constructive manner. • are both substantive and easy to read and understand. • reflect the resources of the institution. • are specific to the individual application. • reflect the numeric score assigned. • highlight the application's strengths and identify areas for improvement. • are directed to applicants—not IMLS or panel reviewers—for their use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simply summarize or paraphrase the applicant's own words. • make derogatory remarks. • penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money. • offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information. • compare the application to others in the review group. • make vague or overly general statements. • question an applicant's honesty or integrity.

See [Appendix C](#) for examples of effective comments, as they appear to applicants.

What should not be considered in your reviews

Sometimes reviewers ask about or mention characteristics that are outside the scope of the 21MP review criteria. This is a list of commonly identified factors that you should NOT consider when reading 21MP proposals:

- An institution's financial or staffing needs
- Whether a project is innovative
- Whether a project is new or a resubmission
- The size or age of an organization
- An institution's indirect cost rate (IMLS honors indirect cost rate agreements that an institution has negotiated with another federal agency, or accepts the 15% rate in the absence of a negotiated agreement)

Bias in the review process

Everyone has biases, which are informed by our own experiences as well as our cultural and social environments. Recognizing this is an important step in mitigating the effects of bias in your reviews. The chart below shows different types of bias that commonly happen in the review process. Think about what may feel familiar as you review applications.

AFFINITY BIAS	CONFIRMATION BIAS	CONFORMITY BIAS	CONTRAST EFFECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favoring those like you • Applicants who “speak the lingo” get less scrutiny • Seen as more believable/trustworthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on information that aligns with preconceived notions • Rejecting ideas or actions that challenge held notions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tendency to be swayed by the majority or loudest voices • Can lead to false consensus and dampening of multiple perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating quality and other characteristics relative to its surroundings (e.g., other applications in review group) rather than on its own merits • Can result in unfair assessment of risk and capacity

As you review, pay attention to your preferences—for example, a project may be well conceived and ready to implement even if the narrative is poorly formatted or has spelling errors. We all have biases but staying aware of your preferences and what makes you feel comfortable can interrupt your bias and help ensure that every application is reviewed fairly.

Example Biased Comments

The following comments contain bias	Explanation
“I couldn’t figure out what this project was about because the narrative was filled with spelling mistakes that were very distracting.”	Comment demonstrates affinity bias.
“While it’s important that museums connect with their communities, they should not be the lead for social service projects like a food bank in the museum. That type of work is not mission critical for museums.”	Comment demonstrates confirmation bias.
“The project timeline seems ambitious, especially since two key partners aren’t identified/confirmed. That said, [Museum Name] is one of the top museums in the US, and I’m sure they’ll be able to make this happen.”	Comment demonstrates conformity bias.
“The risks identified in the narrative were not as realistic and robust as those I read in other proposals.”	Comment demonstrates contrast effect bias.

Step 4: Assign Scores

Assign a single preliminary score to the entire application. Use a scale of 1 to 5, as described in the Scoring Definitions chart.

Scoring Definitions

Score	Rank	Description
5	Exceptional	The application is outstanding and provides exceptional support for the proposed project.
4	Very Good	The application provides solid support for the proposed project.
3	Good	The application is adequate but could be strengthened in its support for the proposed project.
2	Some Merit	The application is flawed and does not adequately support the proposed project. The project proposal could be revised and strengthened for a future submission.
1	Poor	The application does not fit the program goals, is inadequate, or provided insufficient information to allow for a confident evaluation.

Strive to bring the same approach to all the applications you review. Evaluate each application using the criteria in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and in the Reviewer Resources—not against other proposals. It is theoretically possible for you to have been assigned all “Exceptional” proposals, or all “Poor” proposals, meaning that you could arrive at all very high scores or very low scores. You do not need to evaluate on a curve of any kind.

If the project is misaligned to the overall purpose and goals of the 21st Century Museum Professionals grant program, your comments and scores should reflect it.

Step 5: Review Your Work

IMLS is one of the few federal agencies that provides reviewers’ comments to applicants, directly and in their entirety without editing. We do this to make sure our process is as transparent as possible, and to provide anonymous feedback to applicants from their peers. If an applicant is unsuccessful, then they may use these comments to improve their proposal for resubmission. If they are successful, they may use the comments to improve their funded projects.

We hear repeatedly that getting your comments is one of the most highly valued things about IMLS museum grant programs, therefore, review your draft comments and preliminary scores. Adjust your scores, if necessary, to reflect your written evaluation more accurately. Scores should support comments, and comments should justify scores.

Step 6: Enter Scores and Comments by the Evaluation Due Date

When you are ready to enter your scores and comments, visit <https://reach.ims.gov/> and sign in with your Login.gov email and password. Refer to the [How to Review Applications in eGMS Reach Job Aid](#) for instructions on completing comments and selecting scores. Your reviews must be completed and entered in eGMS Reach by the **Evaluation Due Date** listed in the Panel Information tab in eGMS Reach.

The screenshot shows the 'Panel Information' tab in the eGMS Reach system. The 'Evaluation Due Date' is highlighted with an orange box and is 3/4/2023. The 'Chair' is Mark Isaksen, with contact information 202-653-4667 and misaksen@ims.gov. The 'Date(s)' is 2/11/2022. The 'Instructions' section includes a list of steps for reviewing the Conflicts of Interest Statement and a deadline for completing reviews: Friday, March 4 at 11:59:59 PM EST.

Panel Information	
Date(s)	2/11/2022
Coordinator	
Chair	Mark Isaksen 202-653-4667 misaksen@ims.gov
Evaluation Due Date	3/4/2023
Instructions	Thank you for agreeing to serve as an IMLS peer reviewer for the FY22 Museums for America grant cycle. Guidance for reviewers is accessible under the Panel Files Tab below. Before proceeding to the Application Tab, you must: 1. Review the Conflicts of Interest Statement located under your Personal Files (to review the statement, click the paper icon); and 2. Certify that you have reviewed the Conflicts of Interest Statement and that you have no conflicts with the applications that have been assigned to you (to certify that you have reviewed the statement and have no conflicts, click the pen icon to access the click-through signature function). The deadline for completing your reviews is Friday, March 4 at 11:59:59 PM EST.

Screenshot. Panel Information tab illustrating where to find the Evaluation Due Date.

Step 7: Completing Your Service as a Reviewer

Once you have completed your reviews, please hold on to any notes or digital copies of files in case there are any follow-up questions from IMLS staff. You may delete electronic files and shred paper copies of applications and notes after August 31, 2025.

If you requested an honorarium when you submitted the Peer Reviewer Services Agreement, you may expect to receive the electronic payment 4-6 weeks after completing your service. Please email IMLS-museumreviewers@ims.gov with any questions.

If you would like to be notified when final award decisions are announced by IMLS go to the [Subscribe](#) link to be sure you receive these updates.

Appendix A: Confidentiality and Application and Review Process

Confidentiality and Use of Artificial Intelligence

The information contained in grant applications is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions' project activities, or any other information contained in the applications. Because Artificial Intelligence (AI) generative tools rely upon the submission of substantial information, and because AI users are unable to control where the information they have submitted will be sent, saved, viewed, or used in the future, IMLS explicitly prohibits its peer reviewers from using AI tools to analyze and critique IMLS grant applications.

While funded applications become a matter of record, IMLS does not release information about applications that are not funded through our programs, nor do we share peer reviewers' names or other identifiable information. You may share that you have served as an IMLS peer reviewer, but do not share details about the program on which you are working or the applications you are considering. This applies to communications that are in person, in email, and through all forms of social media.

Application and Review Process

The success of IMLS grant programs depends upon the quality of its peer review process, through which hundreds of reviewers consider thousands of eligible applications fairly, candidly, and impartially in order to make recommendations for funding each year. Below is a summary of the process from application submission through award announcements.

1. Organizations submit their applications electronically using [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), the central portal of the United States government for receipt of electronic applications.
2. IMLS receives the applications, and staff members check them for organizational eligibility and application completeness.
3. IMLS staff members identify a pool of available peer reviewers with appropriate expertise. Peer review takes place in one or two tiers, depending on the grant program: field review, panel review, or both. Each complete application submitted by an eligible organization typically receives between three and six reviews.
4. For the applications ranked most highly by peer reviewers, IMLS staff members carefully assess the budgets and past organizational performance.
5. IMLS staff members provide a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director.
6. The IMLS Director makes all final funding decisions.
7. IMLS notifies all applicants whether they have received an award. With their notifications, all applicants receive anonymous copies of the field and/or panel reviews. IMLS also sends notification of the awards to each participating reviewer.

Appendix B: Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

As a Reviewer for IMLS, you perform a vital role in ensuring the integrity of the 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 program officer 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; (202) 653-4787; 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000, Washington, DC 20024-2135.

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 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.

Sample Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a Reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (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 prior to submission of the application) 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.

Pending applications are confidential. 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. 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 other reason.

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

Certification

I acknowledge that I have reviewed the ethics training materials and the Conflict of Interest Statement above. To the best of my knowledge, I have no conflict of interest that would preclude my service to the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Note: Once you have reviewed this document, return to eGMS Reach to affirm that you have approved its contents.

Appendix C: Example Peer Reviewer Comments

The following samples are the anonymized comments made available to both successful and unsuccessful applicants after funding decisions are announced.

Sample 1: Panel Peer Reviewer Evaluation
Program: 21st Century Museum Professionals
Goal 1: Support the professional development of the current museum workforce

21MP-123456-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum

Panel Reviewer 1

Project Justification:

This proposal, which builds on a successful pilot to support museum professionals in their learning and engagement, articulates a strong case for why effective professional development is critical for the field—and for the future success of children’s museums. Pointing to articles and data that reveal how museum professionals are increasingly leaving the field, and how often they are lacking the resources and promotion that they deserve, this proposal makes a case that professional learning itself must change in order to create the types of impact that are needed: ones that value diversity, risk-taking, and high engagement. The narrative builds a case for why children’s museums (and other museums that serve young audiences) should provide the supports for their staff that embody the values that they often put forth for others. Citations and quotes from visitors are integrated throughout the proposal to anchor this argument.

Project Workplan:

This project thoughtfully engages a wide range of stakeholders in its conception and articulation, including advisors, leaders, and participants from the pilot program. It also recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of past professional development activities and aims to remedy those based on feedback and research in the field. For example, alternating between ‘condensed’ and ‘extended’ experiences, as well as drawing upon the strengths of in-person gathering vs. virtual are outlined with convincing clarity. Further, the inclusion of coaching and cohort models are put forward as key elements, cited by current research on the effectiveness of these approaches.

Project Results:

This project is poised for success given the well-articulated outcomes and how they will be measured, combined with a highly qualified team that is experienced in gathering appropriate indicators. The partnership with a larger organization and its potential for spreading word of the effectiveness of this model for professional learning makes a compelling case that this initiative will have impact well beyond the three-year grant and beyond the immediate beneficiaries.

Overall Score

5

Sample 2: Panel Peer Reviewer Evaluation
Program: 21st Century Museum Professionals
Goal 2: Recruit and train future museum professionals

21MP-123457-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum

Panel Reviewer 2

Project Justification:

The organization has the experience and capacity to implement the ongoing program as well as to review and revise it to meet changing needs of museum professionals. The proposal identifies financial resources as a major barrier in participating in the program using surveys, reports, and other field wide resources. The financial barrier means that there is less diversity in the participants. The proposal recognizes a systemic inequity; institutions that are better off financially are more likely to support staff participation. The solution is to lower the cost of the program significantly. This will allow for a more diverse pool of applicants. The narrative makes assumptions that reviewers are familiar with the organization and the program. More information about the program, past changes, and the results of those changes would have given more context to the current proposal. It would have been good to see data from a longitudinal study of the program, taking into account other reviews and revisions, over its history. The identified target groups are communities that are underrepresented and marginalized in the museum field. Consider how to include all-volunteer organizations, rural museums, and non-traditional museum professionals and history practitioners as participants, presenters, and advisors. This is a program that has proven to have sustained impact on the museum field and this project will help it to continue.

Project Workplan:

The work plan is well written. The proposed actions are based in good research, both quantitative and qualitative. The organization and program staff have the knowledge and skill sets to complete this project. The proposal would be strengthened with more information about the selection and specific responsibilities of the advisory council. A job description would have been helpful to read. It would have been beneficial to have a better idea of the composition of the advisory council and terms of service. What are the recruiting strategies? Terms of service? The evaluative information indicates that revising the program is an iterative and responsive process. That shows an understanding that the museum field and leadership needs are changing and professional development opportunities should be nimble to be effective.

Project Results:

The project results are well explained and fit within the scope of the 21MP grant program. The planning, implementation, and evaluative processes are based on research and institutional experience as well as input from past participants. More information about how the lower cost of the program will be maintained after the grant period would have been helpful. Including information about the organization's strategic plan and this program's place in it would have helped with an idea of what the next steps will be.

Overall Score

3

Sample 3: Panel Peer Reviewer Evaluation
Program: 21st Century Museum Professionals
Goal 2: Recruit and train future museum professionals

21MP-123458-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum

Panel Reviewer 3

Project Justification:

The proposal does an insufficient job of providing relevant data to support the stated need of creating a certificate program for public gardens and arboretums. The proposed target audience lacks clarity, which takes away from the intended impact of the program. Mentions of underrepresented audiences for the field is not supported with current data. The project does not clearly identify the program partners but does include a list of specific organizations for recruitment of participants and acknowledging need for training with current staff of the hosting organization. More work needs to be done to clearly identify key stakeholders who can collaborate on the curriculum and experiences that would be most valuable. Further, additional data gathering is needed to define the current workforce of public gardens, which will enable them to have a more clearly defined target audience.

The program was identified as one that potentially be adopted into the current higher education process for establishing new majors for certification. Information on the criteria was absent from the application. Having more details on the logistics of this process could have strengthened their capacity to further develop this idea and have a clear set of guidelines for what they were working towards.

Project Work Plan:

The project lacks preliminary steps taken to begin the program in earnest. More work needs to be done to clearly identify stakeholders/partners, goals for the program, requirements for certification, amongst other things. Once they have a stronger sense of target audience, they would be better poised to work with external stakeholders. The performance measurement plan is weak, relying only on vague observations and tracking of participants. Consulting with other certificate programs and assessments used for other academic programs would be beneficial for this program.

Project Results:

Funding at this time would be premature. More work needs to be done to create a statement of need. The concept of developing the management program has merit, but there is more work to be done. Identifying an advisory committee consisting of partners and experts in the field would help inform the baseline data and clarify program intentions. This committee could also demonstrate fieldwide buy-in support for addressing the need.

Overall Score

1