

Fiscal Year 2025

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# Field Reviewer Handbook

Museums for America

Office of Museum Services

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# Welcome!

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a peer reviewer for this year's Museums for America 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 field 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.

# Museums for America Program Overview

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## Executive Summary

The Museums for America (MFA) program supports museums of all sizes and disciplines in strategic, project-based efforts to serve the public through exhibitions, educational/interpretive programs, digital learning resources, professional development, community debate and dialogue, audience-focused studies, and/or collections management, curation, care, and conservation.

We expect MFA projects to:

- ✓ focus on a key component of the museum's strategic plan;
- ✓ reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter; and
- ✓ generate measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge addressed.

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## MFA Program Goals and Objectives

Reflecting IMLS's agency-level goals, Museums for America has three program goals and three objectives associated with each goal. Each applicant should align their proposed project with one of these three 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.

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### MFA Program Goal 1, Lifelong Learning

Empower people of all ages and backgrounds through experiential and cross-disciplinary learning and discovery.

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#### Objective 1.1

Support public programs, adult programs, family programs, and early childhood programs.

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#### Objective 1.2

Support exhibitions and interpretation.

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#### Objective 1.3

Support in-school and out-of-school programs.

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## MFA Program Goal 2, Community Engagement

Maximize the use of museum resources to address community needs through partnerships and collaborations.

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### Objective 2.1

Support equitable engagement and inclusive collaboration with diverse and/or underserved communities.

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### Objective 2.2

Support efforts to improve access and eliminate barriers to museum services for all audiences.

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### Objective 2.3

Support community-centered planning, civic engagement, and resource sharing to address community needs.

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## MFA Program Goal 3, Collections Stewardship and Access

Advance the management and care of collections and their associated documentation.

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### Objective 3.1

Support cataloging, inventorying, and registration; collections information management; and collections planning.

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### Objective 3.2

Support conservation and environmental improvement and/or rehousing; conservation surveys; and conservation treatment.

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### Objective 3.3

Support database management, digital asset management, and digitization.

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## Funding Amounts

Amount of Individual Awards	\$5,000 - \$250,000
Cost Share Requirement	1:1
Period of Performance	1 to 3 years

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# 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 goals of the Museums for America grant program,
- ✓ meeting the objective and the goal they selected, which includes Lifelong Learning, Community Engagement, or Collections Stewardship and Access, 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.

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## 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](mailto: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.

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## Step 2: Consider Field Review Criteria and Read Applications

We recommend that you begin by reviewing the [FY 2025 Museums for America 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 review

criteria listed below for each section of the Narrative. 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.

## Review Criteria

### Project Justification

- How well does the proposal align with the selected Museums for America program goal and associated objective? (See [MFA Program Goals and Objectives](#).)
- Does this project advance the museum's strategic plan in specific and measurable ways?
- 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(s) and beneficiaries, as applicable, for this work?
- Have the primary audience and other project stakeholders been appropriately involved in planning the project?
- For Collections Stewardship and Access projects, are the collections and/or records that are the focus of the project and their current condition described and quantified in enough detail?

### Project Work Plan

- Are the proposed activities informed by relevant theory and practice?
- Are the goals, assumptions, and risks clearly stated?
- 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?
- 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

- 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?

- For Collections Stewardship and Access projects, will the project improve the care, condition, management, access to, or use of the museum collections and/or records?

## Step 3: Draft Comments

For each application you review, we ask you to write a constructive and substantive comment for each section of the Narrative: Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results. All three sections of the Narrative 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 field reviewer comments

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

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 MFA review criteria. This is a list of commonly identified factors that you should NOT consider when reading MFA 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	CONTRAST EFFECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Favoring those like you</li><li>• Applicants who “speak the lingo” get less scrutiny</li><li>• Seen as more believable/trustworthy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focusing on information that aligns with preconceived notions</li><li>• Rejecting ideas or actions that challenge held notions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluating quality and other characteristics relative to its surroundings (e.g., other applications in review group) rather than on its own merits</li><li>• Can result in unfair assessment of risk and capacity</li></ul>

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 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 10, with 1 being Inadequate/Insufficient and 10 being Exceptional.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Inadequate/ Insufficient			Good				Exceptional		

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 “Inadequate” 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 goals of the Museums for America grant program or the objectives of the goal that the applicant selected, 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.

See [Appendix C](#) for examples of effective comments.

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

When you are ready to enter your scores and comments, visit <https://reach.imls.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. At the top, there are navigation tabs: 'Panel Information' (selected), 'Files and Forms', 'Applications', 'Messages', and 'Readings'. Below the tabs, the 'Panel Information' section is displayed. It contains a table with the following data:

Date(s)	2/11/2022
Coordinator	
Chair	<b>Helen Wechsler</b> 202-653-4779 <a href="mailto:hwechsler@imls.gov">hwechsler@imls.gov</a>
Evaluation Due Date	3/4/2023

The 'Evaluation Due Date' cell is highlighted with a red box. Below the table, there is an 'Instructions' section with the following text:

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.*

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## **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@imls.gov](mailto:IMLS-museumreviewers@imls.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

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## 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.

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## 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.
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# 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](mailto:ethics@imls.gov); (202) 653-4787; 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000, Washington, DC 20024-2135.

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## 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.

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### 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.

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### 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: Field Peer Reviewer Evaluation**  
**Program: Museums for America**  
**Goal: Collections Stewardship and Access**

**MA-123456-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum**

**Field Reviewer 3**

**Project Justification:**

This proposal builds upon two previous phases completed over the past decade which 1) created a DAMS, and 2) scrutinized artifacts and associated curatorial records, resulting in database records which were made public facing. This phase would unite under one integrated, new CMS the museum collections and the library/archives collections. The solution projects a net cost savings, fewer operational limitations, and improved workflows (e.g., fewer workarounds and less duplication of efforts). The migration to a single CMS will ultimately involve thousands of catalogued objects, of which a few hundred will be newly shareable online.

The decision to pursue an integrated CMS was informed by significant feedback by collections/curatorial staff as the end users of the existing systems, a museum-initiated survey of peer institutions facing similar CMS issues, and extensive market research of vendor solutions.

Investment in an improved CMS dovetails with three of eight core areas outlined in the museum's strategic plans and explicitly addresses four of six goals. Collections stewardship and public access are clearly stated institutional priorities.

**Project Work Plan:**

Cataloging backlog, record clean-up, and market research (and possibly selection and contracting) of a new CMS are all occurring as pre-grant activities. This positions the museum to focus exclusively on the data ingest, migration, training, and workflow improvements outlined in the proposal.

The assembled team is qualified and appropriate to the project. There is staff representation from all the collections involved (museum, library, and archives), and staff appear highly invested in the outcome—both in terms of their commitment to the previous two phases and the significant individual time percentages allocated for this phase.

The museum has a robust Digital Project Plan that complements its existing institutional Digitization Guide and Standards Policy and incorporates FADGI recommendations. It is appropriate that the museum is also considering cloud solutions not only for redundant backups but also in potentially reducing costs of maintaining onsite servers.

**Project Results:**

The success of this project will relieve significant pain points for frontline staff and also make collections more discoverable for the general public's benefit. The proposal is realistic in its expectations, and it permits the museum a more sustainable path forward.

Staff have identified multiple ways to quantitatively and qualitatively track progress and define success. These range from analytics derived from public portal usage to a CMS user satisfaction survey.

The museum has already budgeted for the future annual licensing fees of the proposed integrated CMS, thus ensuring stability and continuity of operations.

**Overall Score**

**9**

**Sample 2: Field Peer Reviewer Evaluation**  
**Program: Museums for America**  
**Goal: Community Engagement**

**MA-123457-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum**

**Field Reviewer 1**

**Project Justification:**

The project aligns well with the Museums For America Community Engagement goals and objectives. The museum's strategic plan and goals are described well, but the ways that it specifically links to this project are not called out clearly. The needs have been described, and best practices have been cited, and the museum is relying heavily on lessons learned and information gathered from their own prior experience, working collaboratively with community, incorporating best practices and thoughtful, inclusive engagement into their site operations, architecture and programming.

The target group (community) is not defined in any great detail, which would be beneficial to understanding who and how they would be engaged and in creating specific and measurable goals. The beneficiaries are listed as people, exhibitions and programs, and benefits of the project to these groups are described throughout the proposal. Some further definition of target groups and determining if, and to what extent they are beneficiaries would improve the proposal.

**Project Work Plan:**

The work plan and activities are extremely well detailed, and thoughtfully presented, though a clearer articulation of assumptions, goals and risks would strengthen the proposal prior to the work activities being listed. It is unclear if the intended target group is the museum staff for this project, or if it is the wider community as expressed through the strategic goals. Upon careful reading in the listed work activities, it appears that the staff are the intended beneficiaries initially, and subsequently community target groups will be determined. Further elucidation on this would strengthen the application.

The identified staff and consultants have the skills and experience necessary to execute and manage a project of this type successfully. Further identification of and specificity regarding numbers in target groups would assist in determining if the resources identified are sufficient. The Performance Measurement Plan is thoughtfully designed and allows for results to be tracked and course corrections made. There are sufficient check in points for the various aspects of the project.

**Project Results:**

The project's intended results are well articulated, relate well to the work plan and the need identified. To demonstrate measurability, more specificity is needed regarding desired changes in audience participation and engagement.

The museum has demonstrated, regarding how information and practices learned from previous projects, that they incorporate processes and information learned from previous studies and practices into continually improving their current practice and processes. This has resulted in meaningful change in knowledge, skills and behavior, and this project is well grounded in informed practice and is structured to bring about meaningful change that is sustained and sustainable well beyond the performance period.

**Overall Score**

**6**

**Sample 3: Field Peer Reviewer Evaluation**  
**Program: Museums for America**  
**Goal: Lifelong Learning**

**MA-123458-OMS - Name of Applicant Museum**

**Field Reviewer 3**

**Project Justification:**

The need of adolescents impacted by both natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, and those living in low-income households is evident. Finding ways to support them through informal learning activities that encourage social interactions would be beneficial. However, I think the proposal would be strengthened with some additional evidence of support for this program, as well as its implementation and consideration of best practices. For example, I don't see any licensed Art Therapists included in the project plan or the budget. Art therapy, facilitated by a professional art therapist is different from creative workshops led by artists and educators. My suggestion would be to incorporate professional Art Therapists into the planning and execution of this program in conjunction with the skilled team of educators. It is not clear whether the beneficiaries have been included in the planning, but they have been identified by age and region. I admire your approach to insert yourself into the community and go to these students who are in need directly. After reviewing the strategic plan that was provided I don't see specific, actionable, or measurable goals relating to education programming or community outreach. Perhaps a departmental plan could help provide clarity here?

**Project Work Plan:**

Since the goal of this project is to provide Art Therapy to teens, I don't see that it is rooted in the appropriate theory and practical application necessary to deliver its goals. The risks and assumptions are somewhat addressed in relation to COVID, and the ability to bring these programs to life in a virtual, face to face or hybrid model. Retention is also addressed briefly, but without clarification as to how this will be addressed beyond monitoring.

I'm unsure if the evaluations mentioned are about evaluating the students artistically, or the successes and challenges of the program's outcomes. Weekly evaluations of their artwork and progress is mentioned several times. Although the staff identified to complete the work are skilled and very knowledgeable in their field, I am concerned that there are staff members assigned to provide services that are perhaps outside the scope of their specialty. The Librarian is clearly specialized in the area of work, but I wonder if leading an Art Therapy program as Project Lead is the right fit? You have not provided enough detailed information to know whether or not the schedule is realistic. I did notice that there is no cost share listed in this proposal. More clarification on the budget allocations would have been useful as well as how the staff listed to complete this project will be able to do so in addition to their existing roles and responsibilities.

Methodologies for evaluation was not clearly indicated. When mentioned in the proposal evaluations speak to evaluation of the students and their progress rather than the effectiveness of the overall program. The plan mentions two ways in which the creative journals created by the teens will be shared, however you do not address how the results and discoveries of the program will be shared with peers or others who can learn from your experiences.

**Project Results:**

The project's results need more detail and articulation to fully determine if they are realistic, actionable and fully address the need. The plan for collecting and reporting data is quite sparse in the proposal. Perhaps the services of a professional evaluator could be of assistance with this portion? The creative journals completed by the teens will be useful and empowering for the students, the community and the Museum to have as a document from the program. The proposal does not provide any detail as to the sustaining benefits of this program at its conclusion.

**Overall Score**

**3**