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Institute of Museum Services

General Operating Support
Peer Reviewer Handbook
HOW TO USE THE GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT REVIEWER HANDBOOK

This book contains detailed information about the GOS peer review process. Peer review is an integral part of the General Operating Support grant program: the process is designed so that museum professionals evaluate grant applications from institutions similar to their own. We use these evaluations to determine which institutions receive funding each year. Although written specifically to address the needs of GOS reviewers, the handbook can also serve as a reference tool for museum personnel interested in competing for GOS funds or for anyone wanting to learn more about GOS peer review.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION TO GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT AND THE REVIEW PROCESS provides an overview of:
   - the GOS program
   - the peer review process
   - the way results are communicated to applicants.

SECTION II: BECOMING A REVIEWER answers questions frequently asked by prospective reviewers regarding:
   - necessary skills
   - time commitment
   - eligibility requirements.

It can help you determine whether or not you wish to serve as a reviewer.

SECTION III: APPLICATION REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS provide:
   - basic information on the review process
   - step-by-step review instructions
   - sample reviewer comments.

Former as well as prospective competitors for GOS funding can learn a great deal from the GOS Reviewer Handbook. Those who have been unsuccessful in the past and those who are about to apply for the first time probably have the most to gain. However, even applicants that have received awards in the past are likely to pick up valuable pointers by understanding the evaluation process from the reviewer's perspective.

For more information about IMS grant programs or the GOS review process, contact:

IMS Program Office
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, Room 609
Washington, D.C., 20506
(202)786-0539
Institute of Museum Services
General Operating Support
Peer Reviewer Handbook

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I. INTRODUCTION TO GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT AND THE REVIEW PROCESS

What is the General Operating Support Program?

General Operating Support is a unique federal program which provides annual competitive awards for basic operating support to all types and sizes of museums. Through the GOS program, the Institute of Museum Services is the sole federal provider of operating support to the entire range of cultural, historic, and scientific museums in the United States. GOS grants can be used for most museum operational expenses. To be considered for funds, eligible applicants complete a comprehensive application which details all aspects of the museum's operations, collections, and financial activity.

As with any federal grant program, IMS can award only the amount of money appropriated by Congress each year. Consequently, only those museums which can best establish, in a written application, their adherence to generally accepted standards of museum operations and their effective use of resources in carrying out their stated mission will be successful in the grant competition. That is where you – the museum professional – come into the process. We rely on the participation of practicing museum professionals to help make the evaluations on which final funding decisions are made.

We actively solicit reviewers from every museum discipline and budget size, so that all applications are evaluated by appropriately qualified museum staff. In other words, applications are assigned to reviewers experienced in the applicant's discipline. And in most cases, the budget size assigned to any particular reviewer matches closely the institutional budget size with which the reviewer is most experienced.

How Are Applications Reviewed?

Application assignments correlate a reviewer's experience in a particular museum discipline and budget size with the disciplines and budgets of the applicants. Before we make final assignments, reviewers notify us of any potential conflicts of interest from their preliminary list. An average of 12 applications is assigned to each group of four reviewers.

Reviewers evaluate institutions on their responses to the nine sections in the GOS grant application:

- Audience
- Collections
- Collections Care and Management
- Exhibits
- Education and Research
- Staff and Physical Facilities
- Support
- Administration
- Long-Range Plans

These responses demonstrate how well the museum staff understands and adheres to professional standards. Reviewers also base their evaluations on how well the museum uses its available resources.

Reviewers give one score for each answer. There are seven possible scores, ranging from leadership (7) to unsatisfactory (1). A score reflects the reviewer's assessment of the applicant's overall performance in this area. IMS asks reviewers to make written comments to support each score.
What Follows The Peer Review?

When the review sheets are returned to IMS, each reviewer’s numerical scores are mathematically standardized. A single, standardized score is produced from each reviewer for each application. The four standardized scores for each application are averaged to produce one average standardized score.

After reviewers have evaluated all of their assigned applications and mailed in their completed review sheets, IMS staff examines all aspects of the review process for any potential problems. We look at reviews to see if the reviewers have made inappropriate comments, have not used the full range of scores, or have misunderstood IMS policies. With computer assistance, we also identify reviewers who are in statistical disagreement with the other members of that four-person group. Problematic reviews go to the secondary review panel.

What Is The Role Of The GOS Secondary Review Panel?

Thirteen museum professionals make up the GOS secondary review panel, which assembles in Washington, DC each spring after the peer review period. Staff selects superior GOS peer reviewers to serve on the panel, generally for three consecutive years. Panelists represent a cross section of museum disciplines, budget sizes and geographic regions. For their service, panelists, like peer reviewers, receive a small honorarium.

Panel review is crucial to the awarding of GOS grants. During the meeting, panelists make recommendations regarding the resolution of problems identified by IMS staff. Panelists also assist the IMS staff to assure that application procedures and the review process are fair. IMS may also ask them about other issues pertinent to each year's competition or about improving the GOS program.

Following the panel meeting, all applications are ranked based on the final standardized average, from highest to lowest score. Awards are made on the basis of this ranking.

How Are The Review Results Communicated?

GOS awards are usually announced in mid-May. At that time, IMS notifies applicants by mail to tell them if they have received an award. We also send a list of grantees to all participating reviewers. With the notification, all applicants receive the review sheets containing the scores and comments of the peer reviewers. Applicants greatly appreciate thoughtful, constructive reviewer comments.

Successful applicants point to high scores and positive comments as a stamp of approval for their institution's operations. Museum administrators report that receiving a GOS award enhances fund-raising success with private foundations or other state and local sources.

Unsuccessful applicants use reviewers' comments to revise their GOS grant proposals for future competitions. After adding information or incorporating changes that reviewers recommend, many applicants improve their scores and their likelihood of future funding.

Other applicants, after reading constructive criticisms supplied by their peers, discover ways to strengthen their museum's activities, plans, or policies. In this very direct way, for both successful and unsuccessful GOS applicants, the peer review process offers the most readily available tool for professional assessment and helps to promote the development and refinement of professional standards in museums.
II. BECOMING A GOS PEER REVIEWER

Why Should I Become A Reviewer?

The rewards of being a GOS reviewer are many, as experienced reviewers will attest. You will:

- contribute to the growth and advancement of the museum field
- promote the development of professional standards
- enhance your own professional knowledge
- heighten your understanding of your own institution
- learn how to improve your own institution's GOS application
- receive a small honorarium.

If you are someone with a strong commitment to the museum field who would like to use your professional knowledge and expertise to benefit both yourself, your institution, and our nation's museums, we ask you to consider becoming a GOS reviewer.

How Do I Know If I'm Eligible?

To be eligible to serve as a GOS Peer Reviewer you must:

- be currently employed in a museum AND
- have at least three years of professional museum experience.

Directors, curators, education staff, and development officers, among others, can serve. GOS reviewers represent all types of museums.

What Other Qualifications Do I Need?

In addition IMS looks for people who:

- are strongly committed to the museum profession
- have a thorough understanding of professional museum operations
  - within their own museum discipline and
  - within the larger museum field
- are confident that they can use their professional expertise to evaluate applications
- can review impartially.

A profile of recent GOS reviewers indicates that 2/3 have 10 or more years of professional museum experience and that 70% hold senior administrative positions.

You do not have to know everything about IMS/GOS funding policies to apply to be a reviewer. If you do apply and are selected, you can learn the basics by reading this handbook.

How Do I Get Involved?

You may call or write the IMS program office at any time if you have additional questions about becoming a reviewer or to request a GOS reviewer application. Or you may pick up an application from IMS program staff while attending a local, regional, or national museum association meeting.
The short reviewer application form asks where you work and the museum disciplines and budget sizes you are qualified to review. Return the form to IMS, along with a current copy of your resume. If you are qualified, we will place you in our GOS reviewer "pool" for possible selection during a future grant cycle.

Each fall, in preparation for the upcoming competition, we send an update form to everyone in our pool. The form asks if you are available that year and whether all the information is current. To be considered in any given year, you must return your update form to us by the date indicated.

We cannot predict in advance when we will ask you to review. We can only determine the number of reviewers we need for each discipline and budget category after we have received all of the grant applications for that year's competition. Typically, we ask 40% of the total GOS reviewer pool to participate in any given year, but within certain disciplines and budget sizes the percentage is much higher or lower.

What If I Am Selected To Be A GOS Peer Reviewer?

Prior to the Review: (approximately one month)
• receive a preliminary list of your assigned applications (average of 12)
• check for potential conflicts of interest
• confirm that your schedule allows the time needed
  - at least two hours per application
  = approx. 20 - 40 hours in a four-week period
• decide whether you are able to review (you may decide not to review one year but to participate the next)

During the Review:
• receive shipping box that contains:
  - your applications
  - materials to help you review
  - materials needed for processing applications
  = reviewer questionnaire (for commenting on GOS application and review process)
• read IMS guidelines and instructions
• read all of your applications carefully
• assign numerical scores to nine responses on each application
• provide thoughtful comments that support your scores
• return your review sheets to IMS by the deadline
• CALL IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS

After the Review:
• return your reviewer questionnaire and let us know what you think
• keep a copy of your review sheets and the applications for two months
• at the end of two months, destroy the applications and reviews
• maintain confidentiality of all applications you review

Please note: if you are interested, we will be happy to discuss our evaluation of your performance as a reviewer.

Most reviewers find the process of evaluating GOS grant applications stimulating, educational and rewarding. As a reviewer, you help determine the final GOS funding status of museums across the United States.
If you still have questions, please read Section III of this handbook for more details. You can also talk to experienced GOS peer reviewers. Finally, feel free to call the IMS program office at any time.

IMS can provide General Operating Support to our nation's cultural, historical, and scientific museums only if museum professionals actively support and participate in the process. Whether you are already a GOS peer reviewer or would now like to sign up, we thank you for your service to the federal government and for your dedication to your profession.

### Section III. Application Review Instructions

Section III contains instructions for completing the review process. On the back cover of the handbook is a checklist with a suggested timeline to help you pace yourself through the next four weeks. We strongly recommend that you follow these procedures as they are based primarily on suggestions of previous GOS peer reviewers.

Some steps are required by our processing schedule. The actual method of evaluating each application, however, is up to you. Previous reviewers estimate that it takes a minimum of two hours to evaluate each application. Please allow enough time to do your best work and still return all completed review sheets to IMS by the announced deadline.

**General Operating Support Review**

**The Fundamentals**

This section of the handbook contains:
- technical information about the review process
- a list of helpful reminders
- well formulated comments submitted by reviewers in recent years.

If you have questions about any of these materials, please contact IMS. The Program Office number is: (202) 786-0539.

Before you begin the actual review of your applications, you must completely understand the remainder of this handbook and this year's General Operating Support Grant Application and Information packet.

Read this year's material. The application is revised each year and will have changed in ways that affect your evaluation. All reviewers, even experienced ones, must carefully read the reviewer instructions to be certain they understand what is expected of them and to ensure the fairest possible competition for applicants.

Remember that General Operating Support is your program and reflects the contributions that you and other dedicated reviewers make to it. Thank you for the time and commitment you are pledging to the Institute of Museum Services and to our nation's museums.
How Applications are Assigned

We have attempted to match your assigned applications as closely as possible to the discipline and budget size you indicated that you are qualified to review. Applications have been grouped and assigned to reviewers according to the 13 disciplines listed in the General Operating Support Application and Information packet and by six budget categories. The disciplines are:

01. Aquarium          08. Natural History/Anthropology
02. Arboretum/Botanical Garden  09. Nature Center
03. Art               10. Planetarium
05. General           12. Zoo
06. Historic House/Site 13. Specialized
07. History

The budget category for the applicant is determined by the amount of its non-federal operating income entered on line "DI" of the application "Face Sheet." The six budget categories for each year's competition are based on the actual operating budgets of that year's applicant pool. As the pool of applicants differs each year, the breaks in the six budget categories for each year will vary as well. For the fiscal year 1990 competition, the following budget categories are used:

#1 $ 1 - 145,500   #4 $ 455,669 - 857,489
#2 $ 145,501 - 255,603  #5 $ 857,490 - 1,839,681
#3 $ 255,604 - 455,668  #6 $ 1,839,682 - over

If there were too few applications in the same discipline and budget category to form a separate group, we may have assigned you applications of the same discipline but with more than one budget category. If there were too few reviewers of a certain discipline and budget size, we may have asked you to review museums whose discipline or budget size are not your first choice.

IMS expects you to review all of your assigned applications; however, if you feel that you cannot fairly and objectively review any application assigned to you, please contact us immediately so we can reassign it.

Conflict of Interest

Read through your list of applications to see if there are any potential conflicts of interest. The following conditions reflect a conflict:

1. You, your spouse or minor child are involved with the applicant institution, or in the project described in the application, as a paid consultant or through other financial involvement.

2. The application is presented on behalf of an institution with which you, your spouse or minor child are negotiating future employment.

3. Through prior association as an employee or officer, you may have gained knowledge of the applicant which could preclude objective review of its application. (Past employment 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 an application presents no conflict of interest at the time you review it, one may still develop later on. Once you have reviewed an application, you should never represent the applicant in dealings with the Institute of Museum Services or another federal agency concerning the application, or any grant that may result from it.

When There Is A Problem With An Application

*Eligibility*

Eligibility requirements are discussed in the first few pages of the *Grant Application and Information* packet. The program staff has determined that the applications you received are eligible based on the applicant's responses to the eligibility questions. If you have any doubts about an applicant's eligibility, please contact us immediately. *Do not under any circumstances contact an applicant regarding an application.*

*Application Completeness*

The IMS program staff has thoroughly checked each application to make sure that all required information has been provided. *If any application is missing information, call us immediately.* We will forward the missing material to you.

*Extra Narrative Pages*

Applicants were instructed in the application packet to limit their responses to the space provided. In evaluating an application, you should disregard any information presented in extra pages beyond that space. If you consider extra pages when scoring your assigned applications, you will be unfairly penalizing applicants who stayed within the space limitations.

*Reduced Type*

Applicants were instructed in the application packet to use a type size no smaller than 12 pitch (12 characters per inch). They were also informed that reviewers, at their discretion, may penalize applicants for using reduced type. Please be aware of the variation in type size that may occur when using different computer typefaces based on point size rather than pitch.

With these exceptions, all applications you receive should be complete and in compliance with the application requirements as stated in the application packet.

How To Review

*Evaluating for Effective Use of Resources*

General Operating Support grants are awarded on a competitive basis and are intended to assist museums in maintaining, increasing, and improving their basic services. The award of General Operating Support should be based on the effective use of resources to provide museum services as demonstrated by responses in the application. When assessing the narrative, you will want to refer frequently to the museum's Statement of Purpose, related institutional history, and Financial Statements.
Your interpretation of the scoring definitions relies heavily on your professional knowledge and experience and your objective assessment of the applicant's responses to the questions. As a reviewer, you must determine the extent to which the applicant's responses provide a full description of its services and operations, and you must assess the degree to which the applicant meets generally accepted professional museum standards in providing those services and performing those operations. The applicant's responses to the narrative questions, rather than any prior knowledge of the institution, should be the basis for your evaluation.

We cannot state emphatically enough how essential it is to a fair review process that you apply the appropriate range of scores. Your scores are entered into a computer and standardized. The average of the standardized scores for all four peer reviewers determines the rank of the application. Applications are not ranked by the actual numerical scores you assign but by the relative performance of each application when compared to all others. Therefore, if you award only high scores to all of your applications, you will not necessarily benefit them.

As a service to our applicants, IMS provides them with a copy of your review sheet without identifying you. Please be sure that your scores and comments reflect a realistic and reasonable assessment of the application.

**Evaluating Financial Information**

You should consider the museum's services and operations in relation to the amount of financial support it receives. The financial information is an integral part of the application and should be used in the overall assessment of an applicant's operations. Many reviewers have indicated that they find it helpful to review the financial information either before reviewing the narrative or after the first reading, before they begin scoring the applications. The financial condition of an institution will have a direct bearing on the applicant's services and operations. Your familiarity with the financial information can serve as both reference point and framework for reviewing the application narrative.

Following the peer review the IMS staff and consulting accountants carefully examine the financial forms and audited financial statements of all applications that are recommended for funding. This process ensures that the applicant is awarded an amount which it is eligible to receive. Your own examination of the financial information, therefore, is only for your enhanced understanding of the institution's operations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following financial information is included in a GOS application:</th>
<th>Unless:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Form A (most recently completed fiscal year)</td>
<td>(no exception)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Form B (2nd most recently completed fiscal year)</td>
<td>(no exception)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Balance Sheets (both years)</td>
<td>the museum is part of a larger organization (e.g., university, gov't, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Form C (Non-cash Support)</td>
<td>(optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Audited Financial Statement</td>
<td>an audit is not required by IMS regulations, or the museum is part of a larger organization and is, therefore, not separately audited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reviewers who have attended Reviewer Training Workshops and accountants familiar with the GOS application have made the following suggestions for using the information found in the IMS financial forms and in audits:

Use financial figures to:
- determine percentage of income sources
- make comparisons of fund balances to total assets and liabilities
- identify diverse sources of income

Compare FORMS A and B in order to:
- identify financial stability and growth
- reflect a potential pattern of deficit operations

Compare FORMS A and B with audited statements to:
- verify bottom line figures
- obtain additional information on cost breakdowns
- see more detailed explanation of museum operations in "Notes"

Use FORM C to:
- assess institution's success in attracting support
- correlate non-cash contributions listed on the form with narrative description of community support
### Components of IMS Financial Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMS A &amp; B</th>
<th>STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY</th>
<th>Revenue, Support and Expenses throughout the same year. Form includes operating and non-operating funds; some museums report operating only.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revenue &amp; Support</td>
<td>Sources of income. Bottom line equals non-federal operating income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expenses</td>
<td>Cost breakdown by type of expense (e.g., salaries, materials, utilities). Change in Fund Balance from beginning of year to end of year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALANCE SHEET</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assets, Liabilities and Fund Balances as of end of fiscal year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORM C -- Value of non-cash contributions <em>(Optional)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contributed Services, Materials and Rental Allowances. May be added to operating income on FORM A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Components of Audited Financial Statements

| ACCOUNTANTS' REPORT (Opinion Letter) | Gives an opinion as to fairness of financial statements; assesses the accounting principles used by museum. |
| FINANCIAL STATEMENTS | Assets, Liabilities and Fund Balances as of end of fiscal year. |
| BALANCE SHEET | Revenue, Support and Expenses throughout the fiscal year. |
| STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY | Shows sources of income. |
| St. of Revenue & Support | Cost breakdown of programs and activities. May be separated only by type of expense (e.g., payroll, utilities, printing) or further broken down by function (e.g., collections, education, administration) |
| St. of Expenses | Summary of financial resources in an accounting period and how those resources were used. |
| STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN FINANCIAL POSITION *(Optional)* | Explains organization of museum and significant accounting policies. Gives greater detail for better understanding of specific accounts. Explains significant transactions and events. |
| NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS | |
Scoring the Applications

You will receive enough application review sheets for each assigned application, plus several extra sheets. Using one review sheet for each application, evaluate the institution on a scoring scale of 1 through 7 (1=lowest; 7=highest). In scoring the application, you provide both a numerical score and written comments explaining each score. The scores should represent your assessment of the applicant's level of achievement of generally accepted professional museum standards as demonstrated in their responses to the questions. Definitions of the numerical scores are provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCORE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Applicant's response demonstrates unsatisfactory performance when measured against generally accepted professional standards in this area of services/operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Applicant's response demonstrates some effort to meet generally accepted professional standards in this area of services/operations, but indicates a need for considerable improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Applicant's response demonstrates a considerable effort to meet generally accepted professional standards in this area of services/operations, but indicates the need for some improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Applicant's response demonstrates that its services/operations in this area meet generally accepted professional standards, but does not indicate any additional merit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Applicant's response demonstrates that its services/operations in this area meet generally accepted professional standards, and indicates some additional merit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Applicant's response demonstrates that its services/operations in this area meet generally accepted professional standards and indicates considerable additional merit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Applicant's response demonstrates leadership in this area of services/operations when measured against generally accepted professional standards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assign whole numbers only to each of the nine narrative responses. Do not use fractions, decimals, zeros or more than one number. Score all responses; do not leave any blank.
Comments to Support Your Scores are Essential

When writing your comments you should:
- consider an applicant’s strengths and weaknesses
- acknowledge and compliment strong points
- offer practical suggestions for improving weak points
- correlate your comments to the numerical score
- address the applicant – your professional peer.

Please be sensitive to the effect of your comments to the applicant. Unprofessional comments may offend the reader, and they undermine the applicant’s confidence in the review process.

*Your justifying comments are very important to the applicants and to IMS.* Written justification of your scores is the only means the applicant has to understand the basis of your evaluation. Successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to improve their services and future applications.

*Please type your comments.* Many handwritten comments are difficult or impossible to read.

To help you understand the kind of information an applicant would find useful, sample review comments are provided following these reviewer instructions.

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Call Us If You Have Any Questions
IMS PROGRAM OFFICE: (202)786-0539
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Please keep in mind that the IMS staff is available to answer your questions at any time during the review period. We are normally in the office from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

We greatly appreciate the tremendous amount of time and effort you have committed to being a reviewer, and we thank you for sharing your knowledge and expertise. By participating in the peer review process, not only are you making significant contributions to the Institute of Museum Services and the General Operating Support program, you are providing an invaluable service to the entire museum community.
REMINDERS TO ENSURE A GOOD REVIEW

Call IMS immediately if you find that you cannot serve as a reviewer or if you have any questions or problems.

Call IMS if any part of an application appears to be missing.

Carefully read all instruction materials, application guidelines, and narrative criteria.

Budget your time properly so that each application receives a fair reading.

Base your evaluation on how well the museum uses its available resources.

Use the full range of scores to distinguish among differing levels of professional museum operation.

Provide balanced (positive feedback and constructive criticism), substantive, and helpful commentary.

Make sure your comments justify your scores.

Address your comments to the applicant, your colleague, not to IMS. Museums will use your comments to improve their applications and their operations.

Please type your comments so that IMS staff and the applicant museum can read what you have to say.

Return your review sheets by the stated deadline to avoid any delay in processing of the applications.
SAMPLE REVIEWER COMMENTS

The following pages contain a composite of substantive, well balanced comments contributed in the past by various peer reviewers. Although the application changes somewhat from year to year, we have attempted to match the comments as closely as possible to the appropriate criteria. Please use these samples merely as guidelines for preparing your own comments.

I. AUDIENCE:

Regional marketing program obviously very effective with a visitation increase of over 14,000 visitors. Excellent participation with other historic organizations to further marketing efforts. Do you ever foresee expanding your local visitor base by expanding your minority programs?

Your annual attendance figures on Page 28 don't match with these on Page 34. Your efforts to communicate with the public and make the gallery accessible are commendable, and you seem to be overcoming the "town-gown" barrier that plagues so many college galleries.

Hours are generous and programs varied and demographics of the local population are clearly articulated. Yet I would like to know more about the breakdown of audience who represent museum programs - i.e., white/minority; adults, teenagers, seniors, children; general educational level. Programming for minorities is well-conceived but how are these groups targeted or represented on volunteer/museum committees?

What is the size of your total potential audience? What is the educational level, income range, ages, ethnicity of your public? Your outreach methods for attracting newcomers will only work once they are inside. Why is outreach participation down if this is a priority? Without population figures, how do I know 64,000 is acceptable? What about handicapped? What other museums are in your region?

II. COLLECTIONS:

Description of collections provides a general overview but does not go into enough detail. Names of railroads represented in the collection should have been provided. Also, a further breakdown in numbers of small artifacts versus archival material would have provided a clearer picture of the entire collection.

Having begun your collection in 1874, you must have some important works by regional artists. A more specific discussion of numbers of works and categories and artists represented would have been appropriate. What is community interest in collection? What is percentage of availability? Do you loan objects to other institutions?

Refinement of collection focus to regional and American art and culture makes great sense and will help to clarify mission in the eyes of the community and potential donors. What are the parameters of the fieldwork as a source of collecting? What plans, if any, to deaccession or trade European and Oriental materials? Impressive allotment of exhibition space to permanent collection in plan for new facility.
III. COLLECTIONS CARE AND MANAGEMENT

Well-conceived management and care situation for collections. Good record of previous support for collections management work. Salt air conditions make outside location of rolling stock complicated, but it appears staff has good, consistent program for on-going inspection and care.

Written collections policy in place and consistent with goals and resources. Documentation of bird collection, with similar plans for other specimens step in right direction. Good awareness of potential danger from outmoded taxidermy techniques. Storage barely adequate but current analysis of environmental controls a positive step.

Collections management is generally first rate, but what percentage of collections are catalogued? Who does cataloguing? Document files and photography of artifacts especially commendable. Who determines what conservation can be done in-house? Survey of collections and environmental conditions would be a good idea. How are conditions monitored? What central heating/cooling is in place?

IV. EXHIBITS:

Good fundamental no-nonsense exhibit philosophy that focuses on proximity, first-hand experience, and popular approach. Would have preferred more on major theme and sub-themes used to ground and develop exhibits. What are the key stories the museum seeks to tell with its trains, interiors, and objects? Perhaps an over-reliance on audio-visuals and media.

The brief discussion of exhibit philosophy makes your museum's philosophy seem no different from any other institution. Little information about evaluation. Exhibitions seem appropriate and interesting. Team concept good. Applicant does not respond to request for data on number and age of materials on exhibit, or to questions about size, square footage, labels, guides, or interpretive techniques.

Philosophy and examples relate to mission and collection interpretation. Planning process does not explain staff involvement and decision process. Description of exhibitions lacks details for "highlights" and only generally provides information on didactics – give specific examples.

V. EDUCATION AND RESEARCH:

Good description of peripheral educational programs but too little on how education programs for students develop. Good adult education programs – diversified. Statement of school programs solid. Statement related to research only in part responds to the question, and suggests that research at your museum and by staff is less serious than it ought to be.

Are programs intended to relate to exhibits? For example, how does the photographer relate to exhibits? Otherwise, impressive variety. Very commendable use of outreach locations. Especially impressive is use of museum as site of initial meetings for adoptive parents/children. What happened to earned income from publications, tuition, performances in 1986/1987 vs. 1985/1986?
Close correspondence between school programs and actual school curriculum requirements. Interesting offerings for adults with specific rail-related goals. Innovative programs for children, especially the overnight activity. I wanted some discussion of daily educational programming for regular visitors in addition to special educational programming. What occurs in these areas?

Professional and community involvement in program planning and evaluation sounds excellent. By targeting grade levels, school visits should be more successful. Are docents being trained in new approach? Do adult programs coincide with and illuminate temporary exhibits? Local history research classes a great introduction to your collections.

VI. STAFF AND PHYSICAL FACILITIES:

With 12 full-time positions and over $220,000 budgeted for salaries, why aren't there more professional staff positions? An organization of this size needs a full-time curator and a full-time educator. Security measures are good but a disturbing lack of information regarding safety practices for visitors especially with operable equipment.

The staff seems well qualified and energetic, and is too small to properly handle both exhibitions and programs. Facilities seem adequate for the exhibitions budget. Since things are not likely to change right away, the staff will probably have to re-allocate time to cover more bases. What are you willing to give up?

Director appears qualified to serve a range of responsibilities. What exactly are her responsibilities? It is a pivotal development for you to have hired a Director. What are Gallery Assistant's duties? Do staff members take advantage of workshops, etc.? Who trains volunteers? Your facility has been creatively adapted for new use. Is building one level handicapped accessible? What security devices are in place?

Excellent assessment of needs regarding professional development; good use of IMS in past and proposed continuation. Be more specific on volunteer training. Amount of space for collections care and exhibit preparation seems low. Foundation funding for security/fire systems shows imagination. Pleased to see procedures manual and disaster plans.

VII. SUPPORT:

Municipal services varied. Public cash contributions and memberships low for population size. Increasing and diversifying financial base is vital and some plans are underway. Not all avenues have been tapped. No liquid assets for emergencies. Has Board considered an endowment? Earned income from calendar promising.

Museum seems to be striving in a well-conceived way to broaden its community support beyond existing levels and reliance on city school system. In light of movement of new Sun Belt industries to the area, what sort of new, aggressive corporate membership campaigns might be developed to increase and expand sponsorship of museum events and programs? Some imaginative work needed in this area.
Museum is an important resource for community but community doesn't quite seem to realize it. Such community support as has existed has been very valuable. The effects of the billboards indicate than an analysis of the audience might lead to more effective marketing. 28 volunteers for the museum in such a community is unusually low.

III. ADMINISTRATION:

Board involvement appears on the whole to be positive. However, I must question the effectiveness of the fund-raising committee given the difficulties you have experienced in that area. Transition periods are difficult but professional assistance should help you be able to develop a membership drive and endowment fund, and to be more effective in seeking corporate and institution support.

Any college museum needs a degree of autonomy if it hopes to be any more than a service unit to various departments and offices on campus. Administrators do not like to give up authority. Until your gallery gains this degree of autonomy, you will suffer. On the bright side, your university budget is relatively stable.

Good management structure and Board involvement. Unclear how the rest of the staff fit in and what their responsibilities are. Do they have input regarding plans and directions? Hard to gauge the health and stability of financial condition in spite of superb capital campaign results.

Governing structure and museum management address University and community, while effectively utilizing small staff. Financial condition reflects high degree of reliance on University but changes are being addressed and should expand support beyond collections development.

IX. LONG-RANGE PLANS

Good, simple analysis. Clear goal to be "best children's museum in South." Good to synthesize and integrate subjects in exhibits and programs, but I'd like more information on how you will define exhibit excellence and steps you will take to achieve it. Answers say nothing about prior success in achieving long-range goals. What is your commitment to your site?

Rather than address problems in planning, why not develop a model of your ideal gallery, one that would be like a jewel on any campus? Try to sell that model to your masters, and focus all plans on achieving what you want. Don't worry about the university relations department; they are the same everywhere.

Museum will need an education coordinator on staff, plus other additions if other historic sites are required. You should not wait until the new facility is built to join AAM and AASLH -- do it now. Adding more outdoor facilities as indicated in long-range plan is of concern, given site's size, staff and budget.
### Schedule of Completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>1. Check your shipping box to make certain that all of your reviewer materials and applications are included.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Read your Contractual Agreement. If you see that you cannot fulfill the terms of the contract, contact IMS immediately.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 1-2</td>
<td>3. Read the &quot;Application Review Instructions&quot; (Section III of this handbook) thoroughly.</td>
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<td>4. Read the General Operating Support Grant Application and Information packet. Pay particular attention to the eligibility criteria, application review guidelines and information required for a complete application.</td>
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<td>5. Reread the &quot;Application Review Instructions,&quot; paying particular attention to the scoring definitions.</td>
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<td>6. Read every application through once without assigning any scores. Use this reading to develop a feel for the range of responses in the applications. IMS staff has checked each application prior to shipping your box. If you have doubts after this first reading about the completeness of an application or an institution's eligibility, contact IMS immediately.</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>7. Read each application again, thoroughly. Assign scores and write comments.</td>
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<td>8. Review your scores and comments as a whole. Adjust any as necessary. Check to see that you have reviewed all your applications, scored all responses and provided substantive comments. We will send a copy of your review sheet to each applicant you reviewed when the awards are announced in May.</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>9. Sign your contract.</td>
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<td>10. Return the Application Review Sheets and your signed contract to IMS by the deadline. The review sheet is a three-page, pressure-sensitive form. Be sure that you have signed the IMS copy of each review sheet and attached one of the labels with your name and reviewer number. Return the first (Applicant) and second (IMS) copies of the completed review sheets and your signed contract using the self-addressed stamped envelope.</td>
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<td>11. Complete your reviewer questionnaire. This form asks you to assess your review experience to suggest ways to improve the application or review process. We value your suggestions. You may submit the questionnaire with the completed review sheets or you may submit it later. Please return your questionnaire no later than the date indicated so that we have your comments available for the members of the review panel.</td>
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<td>2 months after mailing your review sheets</td>
<td>12. Keep the applications and your copies of the review sheets (Reviewer Copy) for at least 60 days after mailing. This protects your work in case a problem occurs in the mail. After 60 days, destroy the applications and review sheets.</td>
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### GOS Application Review Sheet

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<td><strong>II. Collections</strong></td>
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<td><strong>III. Collections Care and Management</strong></td>
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<td><strong>IV. Exhibits</strong></td>
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<td><strong>V. Education and Research</strong></td>
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<td><strong>VI. Staff and Physical Facilities</strong></td>
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<td><strong>VII. Support</strong></td>
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<td><strong>VIII. Administration</strong></td>
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<td><strong>IX. Long-range Plans</strong></td>
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**Applicant Copy**