

Museum Assistance Program Ranking Recommendation Meeting

100 Community Place, Crownsville, MD 21032

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

MINUTES

Review Panel members present: Briayna Cuffie, Dave Shackelford, Gabriella Cantelmo, Kari Saavedra, Natalie Shores (virtual), Rod Cofield (ex officio)

Staff present: Nell Ziehl, Brenna Spray

Call to Order: This meeting was called to order at 12:30 PM.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Overview of Highest Ranked Applications

Nell Ziehl summarized the scoring process for the current grant cycle, noting that because Group 1's scores skewed higher than Group 2's, the panel selected the highest-ranked applications from each group to ensure equity. The resulting list was reviewed for regional diversity and museum type, with the panel confirming that the slate represented various museum sizes and types, including several historical societies. The top-ranked applications totaled an amount very close to the available \$285,000 budget.

Natalie Shores noted that Southern Maryland was the only region not represented in the top-tier list. Ms. Ziehl indicated that the two highest-ranked applications from Southern Maryland were presented to the panel for consideration but had scores that were significantly lower than the scores of the top slate. The Review Panel members declined to reconsider those application rankings.

Award Recommendations

The panel discussed the final award slate, addressing remaining questions regarding the highest ranked applications. No ranking changes were requested or made.

A \$4,770 overage beyond the available budget was identified and the panel reached a consensus to deduct the difference from the lowest-ranked project among the top selections. A motion to accept the award slate with this adjustment was moved by Dave Shackelford, seconded by Kari Saavedra, and approved unanimously by the Review Panel.

Feedback on Review Panel Process

The group identified several areas for improvement for future grant cycles. Regarding the rubric, reviewers suggested making it clear that the scoring scale included scores of 2 and 4 rather than just a 1-3-5 scale to allow for better nuance. Ms. Ziehl also committed to providing a comprehensive spreadsheet of all eligible applications earlier in the next process, which would include locational information by county and region.

Reviewers agreed that the budget form should clarify that the numbers should be rounded to the nearest thousand and remove the "In Thousands" instruction. Some reviewers requested a way to distinguish restricted capital funds from liquid operating cash to better assess an applicant's true financial need. The group discussed the relative merits of requesting actual or projected budgets and whether to adhere to a single fiscal year. To ensure consistency, Ms. Ziehl proposed requesting projected budgets for the upcoming fiscal year, although the fiscal year itself could be determined by the applicant. Finally, the group suggested increasing the number of review panelists to accommodate three small review groups (approximately nine people) to better manage the high volume of applications.

Next Steps

Ms. Ziehl will prepare the final award recommendations for presentation to the Board of Trustees. Additionally, the budget form and instructions will be revised to include clearer instructions. Review panelists were invited to submit additional feedback for improvement by email to Ms. Ziehl.

With no other business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 1:10 PM.