

# LSTA PANEL GUIDELINES FOR FUNDING REVIEW

## **Prior to the Panel Review Meeting**

Panel members should review applications and evaluations individually prior to the meeting. They may not discuss applications with other panel members or with applicants.

Grants materials will be accessible online through the [Department of State Grants System](#). Panel members will be able to review:

- Applications (all components).
- Eligibility, as determined by grants staff.
- Prior years' projects – applications, reports, scores, etc. (when applicable).

Panel members should use the panel review page in the Department of State Grants System for each application to record comments, questions and initial score. These initial entries are not binding.

When scoring and making funding recommendations, panel members should review applications based on:

- The need for the project.
- The benefits of the project for the target audience.
- The quality of planning for the project as demonstrated by the application.
- Applications will be evaluated individually by each LSTA Panel member on how clear, complete and appropriate the information provided is.
- An application can receive evaluation points as outlined below:

	<b>Points</b>
Project Need	30
Project Impact	30
Project Implementation	30
Internet Safety Education (Public Libraries only), assigned by the Division	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>

As you review the grant applications, please remember that **you are required to use the published guidelines in the attached document, *Evaluation Criteria***. These same criteria are provided to all applicants.

## **Panel Review Meeting**

### **Meeting Attendance**

The Division of Library and Information Services will post notification of the panel meeting, which is open to the public, in the *Florida Administrative Register*. The division will also give panel members written notice of the meeting at least 30 days prior to the meeting date.

The division will also inform applicants of the meeting date and time. Applicants do not have to attend the meeting in person; they can attend virtually.

Division staff will be at the meeting to track scores, funding recommendations, funding conditions and comments.

### **Review of Applications and Funding Recommendations**

The meeting facilitator will lead the panel through a discussion and review of each application. The facilitator will not vote on recommendations; they are present to facilitate and manage the review process. The facilitator will also manage questions and responses regarding applications.

Panel members will discuss each application before coming to an agreement on a funding recommendation to make to the Secretary of State. The panel can also make funding recommendations that are contingent on application revisions.

For statewide project applications, the panel may choose to reduce up to five percent (5%) from each project. For competitive applications that qualify for funding, funding recommendations can be from \$0 up to the full amount of the funding requested. The panel cannot recommend more funding than is requested for applications in either group.

During the meeting, the panel can revisit applications in order to adjust funding levels to stay within the overall amount of funding available for distribution within a category. The panel is not required to award all available grant funding.

Examples of recommendations to the Secretary of State:

- Funding reduced from requested amount; applicant can determine how to implement reduction.
- Funding reduced from requested amount; the following components should not be funded/implemented. Must include reasoning.
- Project is fully funded, but “xyz” should be revised before implementation.

Each panelist present at the meeting will be required to voice comments, scores and funding levels during the meeting. A panelist absent from any portion of the meeting will not be allowed to provide application comments, scores or funding levels for any portion of the meeting missed.

## **Interaction During the Meeting**

Prior to discussing an individual project, the applicant will have the opportunity to provide a verbal update of their application.

Applicants may also be given an opportunity to answer panel members' questions during the discussion of the individual project. Negotiations by panel members with an applicant are not allowed: i.e., if we provided this much funding, how much could you do?

Applicants may not make presentations and/or lobby for their projects.

## **Voting Conflicts**

It is the Department of State's policy that panel members should not vote on applications when they have a conflict of interest.

If a panel member has any conflict of interest with an applicant or application that is up for review, the member must publicly disclose the nature of the conflict by stating the reason for the conflict. The member must abstain from discussing, commenting about or voting on that application.

Examples of potential conflicts of interest include:

- Employment or family relationships.
- Prior or current business associations.
- Sitting on a governing board.
- Providing assistance with a specific submitted application.
- A possibility for monetary or organizational gain resulting from a funded project.

## **Abstentions**

Panel members can choose to abstain from the discussion on any application. The panel member must disclose this before the discussion period begins.

## **After the Panel Review Meeting**

After the panel meeting, division staff will compile and prepare the panel's recommendations for the Secretary of State's final review and approval. Grants staff will then prepare award notifications and grant agreement documents.

If additional funding remains or eventually becomes available after the panel meeting, the division will set up an additional meeting to discuss additional funding recommendations.