



# NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

OFFICE OF DIGITAL HUMANITIES  
DIGITAL HUMANITIES ADVANCEMENT GRANTS  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS  
Updated: August 22, 2023

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## **1. What is the difference between an inquiry and a draft and how do we submit these documents for review?**

If you are not sure whether your project is appropriate for DHAG, please submit an inquiry. To do so, send a brief overview of your project outlining anticipated activities, audiences, methods, and outputs to [odh@neh.gov](mailto:odh@neh.gov) as a single attachment (one file). The inquiry should not exceed two pages. You may wish to submit an inquiry well in advance of the draft deadline so that you will have sufficient time to prepare an optional draft or to pivot to another funding program.

Once you are confident your project is appropriate for DHAG, we welcome a draft. To submit one, send a narrative, preliminary work plan, and/or preliminary budget as a single attachment (one file) to [odh@neh.gov](mailto:odh@neh.gov). In the body of the email, indicate the proposed funding level, lead project director, institution name, and preliminary title for the project. Do not submit your draft via Grants.gov.

This optional review is not part of the formal selection process and has no bearing on the final funding decision. However, previous applicants have found it useful to strengthen their applications.

For current draft deadlines, see D4. Submission Dates and Times in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

## **2. What do you mean by experimentation or innovation?**

An experimental project creates something new, offering an interesting original approach to tackling a problem. You should conduct a thorough environmental scan to help convince reviewers that your project is experimental or innovative.

Experimentation can take many forms. Some projects demonstrate technical innovation, such as the creation of a new piece of software to address a need in the humanities, or the project makes use of an existing technology in a new way. For example, you might take existing software created for some other purpose and demonstrate how it could be effectively used for humanities research. In other cases, the experimentation does not pertain to the technology per se; instead, it is the project collaboration that is experimental, as with projects that bring together creative individuals from both technical and nontechnical fields to address a longstanding humanities

issue in a new way.

### **3. Our project seems compatible with the goals and activities of another NEH program, but it also could fit as a Digital Humanities Advancement Grant. To which program should we apply?**

NEH funds digital humanities projects across many programs. We encourage you to use [Navigating DH at the NEH](#) (PDF) and [Match Your Project with an NEH Grant Program](#) to choose the program that best fits with your project's goals, audiences, and desired outcomes.

You may have questions about the difference between the DHAG and [Dangers of Technology: Perspectives from the Humanities](#) (DOT) programs. Consider the following when you are deciding which program is most appropriate for your project.

DHAG supports projects that respond to one or more of these programmatic priorities:

- research and refinement of innovative, experimental, or computationally challenging methods and techniques
- enhancement or design of digital infrastructure that contributes to and supports the humanities, such as open-source code, tools, or platforms
- evaluative studies that investigate the practices and the impact of digital scholarship on research, pedagogy, scholarly communication, and public engagement

The DOT program supports research that examines technology and its relationship to society through the lens of the humanities. Those technologies need not be digital.

DOT projects do not need to demonstrate innovation; do not need to enhance or contribute to digital infrastructure or platforms; and do not need to address practices or impacts of digital humanities scholarship.

You may submit proposals to more than one NEH program for complementary (that is, separate and distinct) components of a larger project, as long as the applications address the requirements for each program. NEH does not permit overlapping project costs and activities between two or more applications for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets. If you are uncertain which program you should apply to, we encourage you to contact ODH program staff at [odh@neh.gov](mailto:odh@neh.gov) for guidance, and we can help you determine which program is a good fit for your project. [You may also find the resources on our website helpful.](#)

### **4. I am seeking funding to update and maintain an existing digital project. Which NEH program is the best fit?**

NEH supports substantive work to maintain, modernize, and revitalize existing infrastructure for mature digital projects in the humanities, i.e., those that are fully developed and widely used across multiple institutions and/or communities over a sustained period of time.

If you want to update open-source software platforms, widely-used digital tools, or code libraries for scholarly communications, the Digital Humanities Advancement Grant program is likely the best fit. If you want to apply new data models, make improvements to, or otherwise expand the scope of collections or content for existing databases, digital collections, or reference resources, you may wish to consider the [Humanities Collections and Reference Resources program in the Division of Preservation and Access](#).

**5. How do I know whether my project is appropriate for Level III funding?**

Competitive Level III projects are mature and have an established user base. In your application, you will want to summarize work completed to date, document the number of users or visitors for your current project, and provide a summary of prior internal or external evaluations of your project. Reviewers will be asked to evaluate whether applicants have demonstrated an understanding of the project's long-term needs, developed sufficient plans to ensure the sustainability of the project, and identified strategies for impacting audiences and users beyond the applicant institution.

**ELIGIBILITY**

**6. May a non-U.S. institution or organization apply for an NEH award?**

No. NEH does not provide financial assistance to foreign institutions or organizations. See C. Eligibility Information in the NOFO.

**7. Can our project include collaborators based outside of the U.S.?**

Yes. Eligible U.S. institutions may obtain the services of foreign individuals as consultants to carry out various programmatic activities on a fee-for-service basis paid directly to the individual. See C3. Other Eligibility Information in the NOFO.

**8. If I work at an eligible institution and I am not an U.S. citizen, may I serve as a project director?**

Yes. Project directors need not be U.S. citizens or U.S. residents, so long as the applicant institution is eligible.

**9. May our institution apply for more than one Digital Humanities Advancement Grant at a time?**

Yes. Institutions may apply for and hold more than one of these awards simultaneously. However, individuals may serve as project directors or co-directors for only one application to this program per deadline.

**10. Our organization currently has a DHAG award. We would like to apply for a Level II or III DHAG award to continue the project. However, at the time of the deadline, our current award will still be active. May we still apply?**

Yes. If you are a current DHAG recipient, you may apply for another award, even if you have not completed the first project. However, NEH will consider evidence of the success on your current award when reviewing your pending proposal. You should demonstrate that you have made enough progress in the start-up phase of your project to be ready to apply for an additional DHAG.

**11. Our organization received funding for the start-up phase of our project from a source other than the NEH. Are we still eligible to apply for a Level III DHAG?**

Yes. You may apply to the program whether or not you previously received an NEH award. However, you must demonstrate that you and your collaborators have completed the start-up phase and are prepared to move on to implementation.

**12. May the project director also serve as the institutional grant administrator?**

No. As a matter of NEH policy, the project director and primary contact/grant administrator must not be the same person. The grant administrator (also called the “institutional grant administrator”) functions as the representative of the recipient organization. This individual should have authority to act on the organization’s behalf in matters related to the administration of the award. The institutional grant administrator must sign or countersign financial reports and prior approval requests such as budget revisions, extensions to the period of performance, and changes in key personnel. NEH will address official correspondence (for example, the offer letter or Notice of Action) to the institutional grant administrator and copy the project director.

The project director is the person directly in charge of the conduct of the funded project. Because the project director’s involvement in the project is normally critical to its success, the replacement of the project director or the co-director or a substantial reduction in the level of their effort (for example, an unanticipated absence for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in the time devoted to the project) requires prior written approval from NEH.

**13. How many co-project directors may we include on our proposed project?**

There are no restrictions on the number of co-project directors you may include in your proposed project. However, you should keep in mind that serving as a project director comes with specific obligations that are not present in other titles like research lead. NEH encourages you to use the title of co-project director judiciously.

**ACTIVITIES and BUDGET**

**14. Can our project include students?**

You may include undergraduate and graduate students in your project’s activities and compensate them with grant funds. While degree candidates may not be project directors or co-directors, they may serve in other project roles. Use the Activities and Project Team section of the Narrative to describe how you will support and benefit all project staff, including students, through project-based learning, mentoring, immersion in the activities of the institution, or other professional development opportunities. See sections C3 and D2 in the NOFO.

**15. May we include funds to support activities described in the data management and sustainability plans in our project budget?**

Yes. Your budget may include funds for staff and other costs you would incur **during the period of performance** related to preserving, disseminating, and sustaining the digital materials created under the award.

To see how previously funded projects proposed to implement data management strategies, see the sample applications available on the program resource page. Note that NEH only requires Level III applicants to include a sustainability plan.

**16. May we describe institutional salary requirements in the budget justification?**

Yes. Use the budget justification to contextualize institutional practices in salaries or benefits, such as standard rates for undergraduate or graduate student wages, honoraria, or base salaries for post-doctoral research associates.

**17. My institution has several indirect cost rates. What rate is most appropriate to use for a Digital Humanities Advancement Grant?**

An institution may include indirect costs up to the appropriate negotiated rate in its application budget. With rare exceptions, your institution’s “Research” rate will **not** be the appropriate rate

for inclusion in your DHAG project budget, since it is reserved for projects involving scientific research, not scholarly inquiry of the type most often supported by NEH. You should include indirect costs in your total requested amount. NEH will not add them to your award if you are selected for funding. For example, if an applicant requests \$325,000, this means that NEH would support no more than \$325,000 of a project's costs, including the indirect as well as the direct costs.

**18. Is it possible for my institution to use an indirect cost rate that is lower than its negotiated rate or to waive indirect costs altogether?**

Yes, your institution may include indirect costs up to the appropriate negotiated rates (see question above) and may elect to apply a lower rate. Your institution may also waive the indirect costs.

**19. Who should we name as a key person on the Research and Related Budget form?**

You should only include key project personnel **employed by the applicant institution** in sections A and B of the Research and Related Budget form. Include team members who are playing a leadership role in A. Key Persons and additional project team members in B. Other Personnel. Depending on their role on the project, you may include costs for other project team members who are not employed by the applicant institution on the budget under F3. Consultant Services or F5. Subawards/Consortium/ Contractual Costs. It is important to understand that not everyone listed in Attachment 1: List of Personnel will be a Key Person on the budget. An individual's status on the budget has no impact on their role in the project and its implementation.

**20. Are Automatic Data Processing (ADP) and Computer Service costs the same as equipment?**

No. The ADP/Computer Services section in the Research and Related Budget form refers to paid services at your institution for activities such as high-performance computing, use of GIS licenses, or lab space to complete your project. If you plan to contract with a third party to provide such services, or plan to rent computer equipment, include these costs in line F5 Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs. If you plan to purchase laptops, these are generally considered "supplies or materials" and belong in line F1.

**21. I'm thinking about requesting matching funds for my project. Can my university match the NEH's funds with internal funds?**

No, eligible gifts must be from third-party non-federal sources. For example, if you work at a university and receive a DHAG award that includes a \$20,000 matching funds offer, you will need to certify that you received dollar for dollar donations from people or organizations other than your own institution. You might receive a \$10,000 donation from a non-profit charity at the start of the award; you can send certification of that donation to the NEH and receive \$10,000 from the NEH in matching funds. Later on, perhaps an alumni donates \$5,000 to your project. You send that certification to the NEH and the NEH will give you another \$5,000. You keep seeking donations and sending the certifications to the NEH, until you've reached \$20,000 in eligible gifts You must raise and certify the gifts by the deadline in C2. Cost Sharing.

The full amount of federal matching funds may not be available for release in the first year of a multi-year period of performance. Typically, NEH distributes federal matching funds on an annual basis over the period of performance.

Refer to the [Federal Matching Funds Guidelines](#) document for a list of eligible and ineligible sources of matches.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **22. May we include letters of support with our application?**

No. NEH does not accept letters of support in the DHAG program.

### **23. What is required in a letter of commitment?**

NEH suggests that individuals outside the applicant institution submit letters of commitment, such as advisory board members, consultants, contractors, and workshop facilitators. Letters of commitment may be brief and should demonstrate that the individual is aware you have included them in the grant proposal and understands the level of commitment that the project will require of them. Letters of commitment should not supplement the narrative by further describing the value or potential impact of your project.

### **24. On the Supplementary Cover Sheet for NEH Grant Programs, question number 1 asks for the project director's major field of study. Our project director's field of study is not, however, listed in the drop-down menu. What should we choose?**

If none of the listed fields seems to fit your project director's major field of study, choose "Interdisciplinary."

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

### **25. Where can we find resources with additional information about developing projects that are accessible for users of all abilities?**

Section H of the NOFO includes a list of resources that may be useful in developing plans to ensure that grant products are accessible to a broad audience, including individuals with disabilities.