NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF **RESEARCH PROGRAMS**

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Overview

I am the prospective project director of a Collaborative Research application and have looked at the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) but there is so much information. Where should I start?

From the beginning, partner with a research development specialist or grant administrator at your institution to work together on different parts of the application. Both parties should read the NOFO carefully, but the following points will help you get started:

- The project director should study **A1. Purpose** in the Program Description section and decide which project category is the best match for your project. Compare your ideas with **D6. Funding restrictions** to make sure you are not applying for unallowable activities or costs. Consider the information about **Related funding opportunities (H. Other Information)** to decide whether your project might find success in another NEH program.
- Pay particular attention to **C3. Other Eligibility Information** as you select your project team.
- Focus on the instructions in **D2. Content and Form of Application Submission** to craft a compelling presentation of your project's significance and content. While composing the application narrative, keep the list under **E1. Review Criteria** close at hand to make sure your application responds to each of the evaluation criteria in the appropriate parts of the narrative.
- Assemble materials for **D2. Content and Form of Application Submission** with care to make sure all the required components and information are included and that page limits and formatting criteria have been followed.
- If possible, submit an optional **draft** by the deadline stipulated in **D4. Submission Dates and Times**.
- The institutional grant administrator is responsible for budgets, federal compliance, and proposal submission and should look closely at sections **D2. Content and Form of Application Submission, especially the budget instructions**, **D3. Unique**

Entity Identifier and System for Award Management, and **F. Federal Award Administration Information**.

A. Program Description

1. We are working on a database and mapping project and are thinking of applying in the Scholarly Digital Projects category. Our aim is to gather and share important data that others in the larger scholarly community will surely use to answer their own questions. Is this sufficient?

Probably not. While databases and mapping projects are welcome, they must be conceived and executed to answer specified humanities research questions, and they must include significant interpretive content.

2. How do we know if our digital project is more appropriate for the Scholarly Editions and Translations program or the Collaborative Research program?

If your project aims to make available significant primary source materials (such as important historical, literary, or philosophical documents) and includes annotation and other scholarly apparatus, it may be a digital edition and more appropriate for the Scholarly Editions program. Consider reaching out to both collaborative@neh.gov and editions@neh.gov to confirm that you are applying to the appropriate program. Digital editions are not supported in Collaborative Research (see D.6 Funding Restrictions), and applications proposing them may be ruled ineligible.

B. Award Information

1. We plan to apply for a period of performance of 18 months under the Manuscript Preparation category. May we request $200,000 in funding?

No, unless you are eligible for the added $50,000 incentive for collaborations involving a community college or certain categories of minority-serving institutions. In the Manuscript Preparation and Scholarly Digital Projects categories, periods of performance that total less than two full years must be prorated by month. Therefore, the maximum amount you may request for 18 months in the Manuscript Preparation category is $150,000 ($100,000 for the maximum of one year of funding, plus $50,000 for half of the maximum of a second year of funding). However, if you are eligible for the $50,000 incentive, you could request a total of $200,000 for that 18-month period. The incentive amount need not be pro-rated.

C. Eligibility

1. Does a scholar need to have an advanced degree such as a PhD to serve as a project director for a Collaborative Research grant?

No, but they must have a terminal degree. In addition, the project director's résumé should include evidence (publications, presentations, and other related experience) that demonstrates their ability to carry out the project as proposed. Note also that a degree candidate may not be the project director, project co-director, or sole collaborator.

2. May our organization include a scholarly collaborator from another country in our project?

Yes, and NEH requires at least one scholar not based in the U.S. for Planning International Collaboration applications. For the other categories, you may include international collaborators and you may compensate them with NEH funds as consultants, but you cannot pass NEH funds on to foreign institutions. Note also that a scholar at a U.S. institution must contribute significantly to the project. See **C3. Other Eligibility Information** in the NOFO for information regarding collaborative projects with foreign entities.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. How important is the format of the application?

Applications must follow the format provided in the NOFO. **NEH will not review applications that violate the formatting instructions, including page limits**.

2. What constitutes a good title for my project?

Your title should be descriptive of the project, substantive, and free of specialized language. It should be easily understood by the general public. Omit technical terms, jargon, and unfamiliar words. Avoid a title that requires clarification by a subtitle.

The title included on the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance - Short Organizational form may not exceed 125 characters (including spaces and punctuation). Note that title text over the limit is automatically deleted during the submission process. Your NEH project title does not necessarily have to be the same as the title of your proposed book or project.

For example, "A History of Counterfeiting in the U.S., 1776-1900" is clearer than "Fakes and Fakers: A History of Counterfeiting in the U.S."

When possible, include places and dates indicating a project's scope. For example, "Faith and Belief among New York City Catholics, 1945-1970" is clearer than "Faith and Belief in the Catholic Community."

If you mention a person in your title, include dates and description. For example, "A Biography of German Philosopher Klaus von Guberstopper (1834-1910)" is clearer than "A Biography of Klaus von Guberstopper."

NEH reserves the right to re-title funded projects that do not follow agency guidelines. Award recipients may use their preferred title for any award products.

3. Our project description runs over the 1,000-character and space limitation on the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance - Short Organizational. Is that acceptable?

No. Anything that is over the character and space limitations in both the project title and project description fields is automatically deleted during the application submission process at Grants.gov.

4. Neither I nor my collaborators are able to work on our project during the academic year. Can we work on our project only during the summers?

No. The Collaborative Research program supports sustained full-time or part-time activities over the course of the entire period of performance. If you cannot devote sustained effort to your project, consider applying to the Summer Stipends program.

5. Must we have a contract with a publisher before applying in the Manuscript Preparation funding category?

No. Although having a contract is helpful, proposals without it can be successful, so long as there is an appropriate and feasible plan leading towards manuscript submission to a publisher at the end of the period of performance.

6. We have some supporting materials that are not in electronic format. How can we submit them?

You must convert them into one or more PDF files. See the Attachments Form instructions in the NOFO for guidance on how to format your PDFs.

7. We expect to receive some supporting materials after the deadline. Can they be added to our application?

No. You cannot add additional materials to an application after the deadline.

8. We are a team of collaborators from several different disciplines. Should we pick "interdisciplinary" as the field for our project on the Supplementary Cover Sheet for NEH Grant Programs?

No. You should pick a primary and secondary discipline before you pick "interdisciplinary" as your tertiary, since "interdisciplinary" is not a well-defined academic field.

9. We would like to maximize our chance of receiving an award, so we plan to submit a second application for the same project to another NEH program. Is that allowed?

Possibly, but keep in mind that, per 2 CFR §200.403(f), two applications cannot include overlapping costs or work activities. The two applications would have to be for distinct stages or components, or else the second application might be ruled ineligible. If you have questions about your application's overlap, email collaborative@neh.gov.

E. Budget Advice

1. If we still have questions about allowable costs or administrative requirements after we have read the NOFO and FAQs, whom should we contact?

You should contact your institution's research development, sponsored research, or grant administration office, which will likely be familiar with federal budget requirements. If the staff there have questions about allowable costs or administrative requirements, they should contact NEH's Office of Grant Management at grantmanagement@neh.gov.

2. We can't explain some of the items on our budget form in the space available. Where can we provide additional information for these items?

You must attach a budget justification (section L of the Research and Related Budget form), which briefly describes the amounts requested from NEH for each line item of the budget and how each item will support the achievement of the proposed objectives.

3. Who should we name as a key person in section A on the Research and Related Budget form?

You should include project team members employed by the applicant institution who are playing a leadership role on the project in **A. Key Persons.** You should include additional project team members employed by the applicant institution in **B. Other Personnel**. You may include costs for other project team members who are not employed by the applicant institution in **F3**. **Consultant Services** or **F5. Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs**, depending on their role on the project. You should list individuals affiliated with institutions outside the U.S. who are receiving compensation in **F3. Consultant Services**. Not everyone included in **Attachment 1: Project Team** needs to be included as a key person on the budget, and the status an individual is granted for the purposes of the budget will have no impact on their role in the project and its implementation.

4. May we choose to hold our meetings outside of the United States?

Yes, but there must be a project-related and justifiable reason for convening outside of the United States. Saving money on lodging is not a sufficient justification. Any foreign travel must be undertaken on U.S. flag carriers (coach or equivalent), wherever such service is available. Refer to Articles 9 ("Travel Costs") and 10 ("Foreign Travel") of the General Terms and Conditions for Awards to Organizations (for grants and cooperative agreements issued January 1, 2022, or later) for further details.

5. We are working on a scholarly digital project and need a scanner to digitize archival materials. Can our budget include the purchase of a scanner?

No. As a matter of programmatic policy, you cannot use Collaborative Research awards to purchase computers or peripherals, including scanners and printers.

6. Can we request funds for an adjunct to fulfill the teaching duties of a scholar who will be working on our project instead of teaching?

No. All grant funds must directly support work on the proposed project. You may not request funding for an adjunct not working on the project, but you may request funds to compensate the time and effort of the scholar working on the project.

7. We will be applying in the Scholarly Digital Projects category and would like to hold a symposium or conference to launch the project. May we request funding for a rental venue for this purpose?

No. Neither the Scholarly Digital Projects category nor the Manuscript Preparation category supports convenings. Travel costs for core team members to visit crucial archives or research sites, or to meet in person to complete essential work on the manuscript or digital project, can be supported but must be justified in the application.

F. Application Review

1. What can we do to increase our chances for success?

Familiarize yourselves with all the materials on the program resource page. There you will find sample proposals and a list of recently funded projects. Be sure to follow all the instructions in the NOFO because it changes somewhat each year. NEH strongly encourages you to submit a draft. If your application is unsuccessful, request the reviewers' comments and incorporate their advice in a revised application. For reasons of confidentiality, requests for reviewers' comments must be made by email to collaborative@neh.gov by either the project director or the institutional grant administrator. If you still have specific questions, email the Collaborative Research program staff at collaborative@neh.gov.

2. We applied last year and were unsuccessful. Will this be held against us if we apply again this year?

No. NEH regards all applications as new. Previous unsuccessful applications are considered confidential and will not be disclosed to the reviewers, who will not be the same reviewers who evaluated your previous application. We encourage you not to mention unsuccessful applications in your narrative.