



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

OFFICE OF **CHALLENGE GRANTS**

CHALLENGE GRANTS FOR TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

May my institution, which conducts humanities programs, apply under the special initiative for two-year colleges?

Only U.S. two-year colleges may apply under this special initiative. Other types of U.S. institutions may partner with a two-year college, but the applicant receiving, managing, and benefiting from the grant must be a U.S. two-year or community college, or a consortium of U.S. two-year colleges.

What is the matching requirement for grants awarded under the special initiative?

The matching requirement is two-to-one, two nonfederal dollars to one federal (NEH) dollar.

How is “two-year college” defined for the purposes of this initiative?

To be eligible to apply under this special initiative, an institution must be an accredited U.S. college that predominantly awards associate degrees that can be earned in a two-year program of study. The terms “two-year college” and “community college” are, for the purposes of this initiative, interchangeable.

May my two-year college apply for a challenge grant that is not related to NEH’s *Bridging Cultures* emphasis?

Yes. *Bridging Cultures* is an Endowment-wide initiative, which aims to increase the understanding of foreign cultures, the nature of diversity in the United States, and the ways in which Americans have attempted to bridge cultural divides. While NEH hopes (and anticipates) that many of the applications will address *Bridging Cultures* in some way, they need not do so.

May my institution apply for more than one challenge grant at a time?

No. Only one application from any applicant may be entered in a challenge grant competition in a calendar year.

My two-year college received a regular NEH challenge grant a number of years ago. Is my institution eligible to apply under this special initiative?

Yes. Recipients of prior NEH Challenge Grants are eligible to apply under this special initiative. The regular waiting period applies to such an application: a holder of a challenge grant must wait three years from the close of the first grant to be eligible to apply for a second grant.

My institution was awarded a challenge grant last year. May we apply this year?

No. An institution may receive only one challenge grant at a time, and there is a three-year waiting period between the close of one challenge grant and an application for another.

I'd like to send a draft proposal for NEH staff comment. How do I do that?

While it is not mandatory to submit a draft, applicants are encouraged to do so, at least four to six weeks before the application deadline. Time constraints may prevent staff from reviewing draft proposals submitted less than four weeks before the application deadline. Drafts should include the narrative, the budget, and a list of persons who will be writing letters of support. The preferred method of submitting draft proposals is by e-mail attachment (challenge@neh.gov). Drafts may also be submitted by fax (202-606-8579) or commercial delivery service (Office of Challenge Grants, NEH, Room 420, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506, 202-606-8309).

Should our institution include letters of support or commitment as part of our application or should they be sent separately?

Letters of support or commitment should be included with the application, in an appendix, as one of the PDF attachments to the Grants.gov application.

Are in-kind donations permitted for matching an NEH Challenge Grant?

Yes, subject to the limitation that the total of such donations may not exceed the federal portion of the grant (that is, one-third of the total grant). In-kind gifts or donated services are eligible only if the material or service provided is clearly related to the nature of the humanities activities being supported.

Are unrestricted gifts to my two-year college allowable for match?

Yes, subject to two limitations: 1) the total of unrestricted donations may not exceed the federal portion of the grant (that is, one-third of the total grant); and 2) like restricted gifts, unrestricted challenge gifts must be donated during the grant period.

How is the grant period for a challenge grant determined, and why is it important?

The grant period is important because all nonfederal donations must be given during the grant period in order to be counted toward the required match. The grant period begins five months before the application deadline, and it ends approximately six and one-half years after the deadline. An exception to the standard grant period is made for applicants who, unsuccessful at one deadline, revise and resubmit their applications one year later. Such applicants may use the same starting date in the resubmission as in the original submission. This extension enables the applicant to keep faith with donors whose gifts have been solicited in anticipation of a challenge grant. (If the resubmitted application is not successful, however, this extension is not available for subsequent submissions.)

May I use a single challenge grant to fund more than one project, such as endowing a professorship and renovating the library?

Yes, a single challenge grant may be used to support more than one project. Program experience, however, strongly suggests that an application requesting support for unrelated projects does not fare well in the grant competition.

May my two-year college use an NEH Challenge Grant to build a campus performing arts center or art department?

A proposal to fund an arts-oriented building or department will be considered for an NEH challenge grant only if the proposal clearly demonstrates that the facility or program serves the humanities. Components of projects that deal with the visual or performing arts are eligible for NEH challenge grant funding only if they enhance the interpretation or analysis of the artistic form in question, using critical, historical, theoretical, or other humanities-oriented perspectives.

The application instructions include a financial summary form. May I submit a copy of my institution's audited financial statements instead of using the financial summary form?

The financial summary form is a suggested format only, and you may create your own form or use an existing institutional form. In any case, the form must provide the same kind of information: that is, a summary snapshot of income and expenditures over the last three years. Full audited accounts or reports are not useful for the program's purpose. Rather than sending the full records, applicants should extract and submit information of the kind that is requested on the NEH financial summary form.

We are planning on submitting an application for a renovation and construction project, and we have contacted our State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) as instructed. But she has not yet provided the necessary letter. May the application be submitted without the SHPO letter?

Yes. Should the application be successful, however, the SHPO letter will be required—and the other requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act must be met—

before any federal funds can be released. The SHPO must be consulted before construction or renovation begins.

When will I hear whether my institution is being offered a challenge grant?

Approximately six months after the application deadline.