



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE  
**Humanities**

DIVISION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS

**HUMANITIES IN THE PUBLIC  
SQUARE**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

---

**What are the humanities?**

According to the 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act, “The term ‘humanities’ includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.”

**What is NEH’s Common Good initiative?**

The Common Good is a new initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities designed to demonstrate the critical role that humanities scholarship can play in our public life. Through NEH’s traditional grant-making programs and several special initiatives, The Common Good will encourage humanities scholars to turn their attention to topics that have widespread resonance with the American people and that lend themselves to the methods and concerns of the humanities. More information on *The Common Good* can be found [here](#).

**What are “humanities themes”?**

A theme is a brief interpretive assertion about a topic that shows the educational direction that a project will take. More than a topic, a theme considers the relevant humanities scholarship and offers a broad conceptual framework for understanding material. For example, “Women in the Civil War” is a topic. It describes a subject but does not reveal what the interpretive approach to it would be. On the other hand, “Women played important economic roles during the Civil War” is a theme. It identifies a topic and also suggests what audiences might learn about it.

### **What is a humanities scholar?**

Someone who has an advanced degree in a discipline of the humanities is generally considered a scholar. Scholars can provide context for a project and identify relevant humanities themes and ideas.

### **When should I start consulting with scholars about a project?**

The earlier scholars are involved in a project, the better. A project is more likely to be recommended for funding if scholars have had a central role in helping shape the project's conceptual framework.

### **Is it okay to rely on a single scholar for a project?**

Projects that depend on input from a single scholar are not competitive. Working with a number of scholars allows projects to explore a diverse range of interpretive possibilities.

### **How do I find the right scholarly advisers for a project?**

There are many ways to find scholars for your project. Check with your local college or university to see if any faculty members have relevant expertise or could suggest the names of other scholars. You can also peruse bookstores (either real or online), libraries, and Web resources to see who has published on topics related to your project. [State humanities councils](#) often maintain lists of scholars who have participated in public programs.

### **How much should I pay scholarly advisers?**

There is no set fee for scholars and other professionals working on a project. Some projects pay scholars a flat honorarium, others pay a daily rate. Discuss your project with the scholars, including the work that you expect from them, and negotiate a fair rate.

### **If I wish to apply for a grant to implement public programs and discussions on themes that do not fit with the The Common Good, where should I apply?**

To apply for funding for public programs that may not meet the requirements of the Humanities in the Public Square program, please see the Division of Public Programs' guidelines for the two Museums, Libraries, and Cultural Organizations programs: [Planning Grants](#) and [Implementation Grants](#). Both programs have an August 12, 2015, deadline.

### **Where should I apply if I want to produce a media project?**

If you are planning to produce a radio program, film, television series, or podcast for broad regional or national distribution over broadcast media or the Internet, the most appropriate program is Media Projects. (You can find the program's development guidelines [here](#), and its production guidelines [here](#).)

### **Will Humanities in the Public Square fund resources for students and teachers?**

Yes, projects can include resources that help students and teachers explore the humanities content and themes central to the project. Such resources might include brief audio or video clips, hands-on activities, curriculum guides, interactive games, scholarly essays, maps, and/or timelines.

### **May I apply for more than one NEH grant for my project?**

Applicants may apply to NEH for support for different phases and activities of their projects. For example, an institution may apply to the Division of Preservation and Access for a preservation grant to stabilize its collections, to the Office of Challenge Grants for a challenge grant to support a capital improvement program, and to the Division of Public Programs for a grant to support interpretive public programs.

Applicants may not, however, submit a second proposal for a project if the outcome of the prior application is still pending.

### **How long a grant period should I request?**

The period for these grants is twelve months.

### **How long do I have to wait to hear the outcome of the application review?**

The final decisions on the applications to Humanities in the Public Square should be made by December 2015. We will notify applicants then.

### **Are program officers available through phone or e-mail to answer questions?**

Yes. Applicants are encouraged to contact us to discuss applications prior to their submission. The staff can be reached at 202-606-8269 or [publicpgms@neh.gov](mailto:publicpgms@neh.gov).

### **What are the differences between outright funds and matching funds? What is cost sharing?**

Outright funds are awarded without being contingent on additional fundraising.

Matching funds require a grantee to obtain nonfederal gift funds from third parties before federal funds are awarded.

Learn more about [different types of grant funding](#).

Cost sharing consists of the cash contributions made to a project by the applicant and third parties as well as third-party in-kind contributions, such as donated goods and services. Cost sharing also includes nonfederal gift money that will be raised to release federal matching funds.

**If I receive NEH funding, may I also accept funding from other sources?**

Yes. Applicants are encouraged to seek funding from diverse sources. Submitting proposals to other funders has no bearing on how NEH reviews proposals. We do ask that you tell us about those applications, so that we can better understand the project's funding situation.