



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY BUILDING CHALLENGE GRANTS

Deadline: March 15, 2018

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 45.130

Funding Opportunity Number: 20180315-CHA

If after reading this document you have questions about this grant program, contact the staff of NEH's Division of Preservation and Access at 202-606-8309 or at challenge@neh.gov. Applicants who are deaf or hard of hearing can contact NEH via Federal Relay (TTY users) at 800-877-8399.

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I. Program Description

The mission of this Challenge Grants program is to strengthen the institutional base of the humanities by enabling infrastructure development and capacity building. Grants aim to help institutions secure long-term support for their core activities and expand efforts to preserve and create access to outstanding humanities materials. Applications are welcome from colleges and universities, museums, public libraries, research institutions, historical societies and historic sites, scholarly associations, state humanities councils, and other nonprofit humanities entities. Programs that involve collaboration among multiple institutions are eligible as well, but one institution must serve as the lead agent and formal applicant of record.

Through these grants organizations can increase their humanities capacity with spend-down funds that generate expendable earnings to support and enhance ongoing program activities. Eligible activities include the documentation of cultural heritage materials that are lost or imperiled; the preservation and conservation of humanities materials; and the sustaining of digital scholarly infrastructure.

Challenge grants may also provide capital directly supporting the purchase of equipment and software; the design, purchase, construction, restoration, or renovation of facilities needed for humanities activities; and collections sharing. Such direct expenditures bring long-term benefits to the institution and to the humanities more broadly. Grantee institutions may also expend up to 10 percent of total grant funds (federal funds plus matching funds) to defray costs of fundraising to meet the NEH challenge.

Challenge grant funds (both federal and nonfederal together) must enhance the humanities in the long term. Challenge grant funds should not merely replace funds already being expended, but instead should reflect careful strategic planning to strengthen and enrich an institution's humanities activities. Institutions may use challenge grant funds to meet both ongoing and one-time humanities-related costs, provided that the long-term benefit of the expenditure can be demonstrated.

Mode of expenditure

The financial arrangement by which challenge grant funds are expended should be appropriate to the nature of the humanities-related costs and the long-term impact of the expenditure. Funds may be

- spent directly on one-time capital costs for items that have inherent longevity, such as facilities (new construction or renovation), equipment, and acquisitions; or
- invested in “spend-down” or “depleting” funds that provide income over a predetermined time (no less than five years, no more than ten years), during which both income and principal are spent in support of humanities activities. Spend-down funds are particularly appropriate for programs that are long-term but not permanent.

Activities supported

Activities supported by Challenge Grant funds include

- **capital expenditures such as the design, purchase, construction, restoration or renovation of facilities and historic landscapes;**
- **the purchase of equipment and software;**
- **the documentation of cultural heritage materials that are lost or imperiled;**
- **the sustaining of digital scholarly infrastructure;**
- **the preservation and conservation of collections; and**
- **the sharing of collections.**

These activities can be supported in two different ways.

I. Direct expenditure funds can be used to support the following sorts of activities:

- **Capital expenditures such as the design, purchase, construction, restoration or renovation of facilities and historic landscapes.**

All NEH-funded projects involving construction, renovation, repair, rehabilitation, or ground or visual disturbances must comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Applicants should familiarize themselves with Section 106 of the NHPA and its implementing regulations (PDF) and include as part of the application materials that will be or have been submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer. (See below, beneath the “Special requirements for construction and renovation projects” heading, for additional information.)

- **The purchase of equipment and software.**
- **The sharing of collections.**

The National Endowment for the Humanities is committed to supporting the sharing of collections by all categories of institutions with collections. Museums, libraries, and other institutions devoted to history, art, and the humanistic study of science are encouraged to make parts of their holdings available to communities outside of their area and if possible to underserved populations.

Grants are available to individual institutions and consortia for the sharing of collections through single exhibitions as well as through exhibition series. If a consortium application is submitted, one institution must serve as the lead agent and formal applicant of record.

- **Fundraising costs** (totaling no more than 10 percent of all challenge grant funds—that is, federal funds plus matching funds).

II. Spend-down Funds can provide income to support the following sorts of activities:

- **Documenting cultural heritage materials that are lost or imperiled.**

Funds may be used for projects that conduct research and develop resources for the study, documentation, and presentation of lost or imperiled cultural heritage materials.

- **Preserving and conserving collections.**

Funds may be used for examining and treating objects as well as for creating or enhancing treatment facilities and storage facilities for the preservation and conservation of collections.

- **Sustaining digital scholarly infrastructure.**

Funds may be used to support ongoing costs of scholarly projects in digital form such as paying hosting fees, upgrading software to modern versions and adding new or updated content. Costs related to marketing services to users as well as providing support and training for users can be included in the grant request.

A challenge grant may support only one project. The project may, however, have multiple elements or phases.

Expenditures not eligible for support

Challenge grant funds, federal or nonfederal, may not be used for

- one-time or operating expenditures with minimal long-term impact;
- fellowships, scholarships, or stipends;
- promotion of a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view;
- advocacy of a particular program of social or political action;
- support of specific public policies or legislation; or
- projects that fall outside of the humanities (including the creation or performance of art; creative writing, memoirs, and creative nonfiction; and empirically based social science research or policy studies). A proposal for a “Center for the Arts,” for example, must clearly demonstrate how the facility serves the humanities as well as the arts. 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. Similarly, proposals in the social sciences must explain their significance for the humanities.

Special encouragement

In accordance with Executive Order 13779 on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Executive Order 13592 on Tribal Colleges and Universities, NEH especially welcomes challenge grant applications from these institutions. NEH also welcomes applications from two-year colleges. Potential applicants from these institutions are urged to discuss with program staff ways in which challenge grant funding can help them meet their institutions' particular needs and capacities in the humanities. Note that the program discourages applications from two-year colleges requesting funding for construction or renovation projects.

Certain requirements of regular challenge grants are modified for HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and two-year colleges. The required matching ratio is one-to-one (instead of three-to-one or in some cases four-to-one), and the schedule for meeting the required match may be spread over six years instead of five.

Matching funds requirements

NEH will offer successful applicants matching funds. The requested grant amount should be appropriate to the humanities needs and the fundraising capacity of the institution. Though requests for up to \$750,000 are eligible, the federal portions of NEH challenge grants will generally not exceed \$500,000. Grant recipients must raise—from nonfederal third-party donors—three times the amount of federal funds offered for grants up to \$500,000 and four times the amount of federal funds offered for grants in excess of \$500,000. For example, a \$500,000 grant requires a \$1.5 million match. HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and two-year colleges are required only to match the federal funds offered on a one-to-one basis (whatever the size of the grant).

Fundraising

NEH challenge grants assist institutions in developing sources of support for humanities programs, and fundraising is an integral part of the long-term planning that challenge grants require. Persons raising the funds, as well as those who will be directly responsible for the humanities programs, should be fully involved in the planning from the outset.

Release of federal funds

All federal challenge grant funds are matching funds. As illustrated in the sample release schedule below, NEH typically offers the federal portion of a challenge grant in four annual installments, but the grantee may take up to sixty-eight months to raise funds for matching. NEH releases federal funds according to a pattern that permits donations in anticipation of a challenge grant from as early as five months prior to the application deadline. The grant schedule also allows donations that count toward the match in the grant's fifth year, after all the offered federal funds have been released.

NEH releases federal funds in the first three annual installments only when matched in accord with the required three-to-one (or, in some cases, four-to-one) ratio. (Challenge grants to HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and two-year colleges have a one-to-one ratio; see below.)

In a regular challenge grant’s fourth year NEH can release the offered federal funds when matched only one-to-one, leaving the remaining two parts of the required three-to-one match (or, in some cases, the remaining three parts of the required four-to-one match) to be raised in the fifth and final year. This pattern allows time at the end of the grant to finish the match and collect outstanding pledges.

The following chart illustrates a typical match and release schedule:

Sample match and release schedule for a regular challenge grant						
EXAMPLE ONLY: NEH Challenge offer of \$300,000, with a three-to-one matching ratio						
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
NEH funds (federal) offered	\$25,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$75,000	n/a	\$300,000
Nonfederal funds to be raised	\$75,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$900,000
Total grant funds (federal + nonfederal)	\$100,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$1,200,000

Variations on a typical match and release schedule are possible, and applicants should discuss with NEH staff the schedule that best reflects the institution’s plans and fundraising capacity. NEH, however, makes the final determination of the match and release schedule.

With a matching ratio of one-to-one, HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and two-year colleges follow a match and release schedule that differs somewhat from that of regular challenge grants. The federal portion of a challenge grant is offered over six rather than four years. Furthermore, HBCU, Tribal College and University, and two-year college grantees may take up to eighty (instead of sixty-eight) months to raise funds for matching. As with regular challenge grants, NEH allows donations from as early as five months prior to the application deadline.

NEH releases funds in all six years of the grant when completely matched according to the required one-to-one ratio.

The following chart illustrates a typical match and release schedule for these three sorts of institutions:

Sample match and release schedule for a challenge grant to an HBCU, a Tribal College or University, or a two-year college

EXAMPLE ONLY: NEH Challenge offer of \$300,000, with a one-to-one matching ratio

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
NEH funds (federal) offered	\$25,000	\$75,000	\$100,000	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$300,000
Nonfederal funds to be raised	\$25,000	\$75,000	\$100,000	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$300,000
Total grant funds (federal + nonfederal)	\$50,000	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$600,000

The grant period for all challenge grants begins five months before the application deadline, and the grant period for most challenge grants ends sixty-eight months later. Thus the grant period for applications submitted at the March 2018 deadline begins October 1, 2017, and ends May 31, 2023. (Grants to HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and two-year colleges would end May 31, 2024.)

Applicants who, unsuccessful at one deadline, revise and resubmit their applications at the next annual deadline may use the same starting date in the resubmission as in the original submission. Such applicants may thereby extend the fundraising period by twelve months. In this way applicants can keep faith with donors whose gifts were solicited in anticipation of a challenge grant. But if the resubmitted application is not successful, the extended grant period is not available a third time; instead the starting date of a third submission reverts to five months before the deadline for the new application.

Eligibility of gifts

To be eligible for matching, gifts may not derive from the grantee institution itself. It is inappropriate for an institution to shift internal budgets or reallocate internal funds for matching purposes. All matching pledges and gifts must be new—that is, given (and pledges fulfilled) from five months prior to submission through the challenge grant period. The majority of gifts eligible for matching must be *restricted*—that is, donations made explicitly in response to or in anticipation of the challenge grant. Donors of *restricted* gifts must be aware that their

gifts will be used to fulfill the match of an NEH challenge grant and that their gifts will be used to support the purposes outlined in the approved challenge grant application. *Unrestricted* gifts—that is, gifts donated without limitations on their use—may be eligible for matching, but the donor must have made the gift within the grant period, and the total of such unrestricted gifts may not exceed the federal portion of the challenge grant. Some types of gifts, such as real estate, earned income, planned giving, and in-kind gifts, are subject to special limitations. Discounts on contracted goods and services, as well as contributions from federal sources, are not eligible for matching.

NOTE: More detailed information on eligible gifts and the mechanics of challenge grant administration can be found in the booklet [Administration of NEH Challenge Grants](#). Program staff strongly encourages applicants to consult this booklet if they plan to solicit and collect eligible matching gifts in anticipation of receiving an NEH challenge grant.

Eligibility

With the exception of elementary and secondary schools (public or private) and school districts, public agencies, federally recognized Native American tribal governments, and U.S. nonprofit institutions with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status that work wholly or in part with the humanities may apply for a challenge grant. Such institutions must support research, education, preservation, or public programming in the humanities. Affiliated institutions (for example, a university museum) should consult with NEH staff on questions of separate eligibility.

NEH generally does not award grants to other federal entities or to applicants whose projects are so closely intertwined with a federal entity that the project takes on characteristics of the federal entity's own authorized activities. This does not preclude applicants from using grant funds from, or sites and materials controlled by, other federal entities in their projects.

Challenge grantees may not use funds from other federal entities to match NEH challenge grants.

Institutions may apply for only one NEH challenge grant in a calendar year. An institution is eligible to apply for a subsequent challenge grant beginning in the third year after the closing date of its most recent NEH challenge grant. For example, if a grant closed in 2017, the institution that received the grant may not apply for a subsequent challenge grant until 2020.

NEH will not review late, incomplete, or ineligible applications.

II. Preparing and Organizing your Application

Resources for preparing a strong application

To prepare a strong application, applicants are encouraged to take the following steps:

- read these **guidelines** carefully, noting what information needs to be provided in the application;
- be sure to address the program's **evaluation criteria**, which are listed immediately below;

- read the **Frequently Asked Questions**, which are available on the [program resource page](#);
- contact the **program staff** (at 202-606-8309 or at challenge@neh.gov) to discuss your project and raise any questions you may have about the application; and
- submit an optional **draft proposal**, to which program staff will respond with suggestions and advice (you can find additional information below, beneath the evaluation criteria).

Evaluation criteria

Applications are evaluated according to the five criteria listed below.

- **The significance of humanities activities**
What is the evidence that the current and planned activities—particularly those that will be affected by the challenge grant—are significant and that their intellectual quality is high? Why are these activities important, and to whom?
- **The appropriateness of resources and plans**
What evidence is there of realistic long-range institutional planning to advance and/or disseminate humanistic knowledge? Is the institution, through its mission, personnel, governance, facilities, and resources, capable of sustaining outstanding activities in the humanities? What evidence (such as letters of support) is there of sufficient institutional and community commitment to the long-range plans? Is the mode of expenditure (direct or spend-down) appropriate to the humanities-related costs and to the nature of the activities to be supported?
- **The impact of challenge grant funds**
What impact will grant funds have on strengthening and improving the understanding of the humanities? How will the NEH challenge grant sustain and enhance significant humanities activities over the long term? Are the planned challenge grant expenditures (federal and nonfederal combined) described clearly and in detail? How will the institution assess the impact of the challenge grant?
- **The audience served**
What is the intended audience? What is the evidence that the audience will benefit from the grant activities?
- **The feasibility of fundraising**
Does the institution provide evidence or promise of long-term financial stability? Do the applicant's resources, leadership, staff, and experience suggest that it will be able to conduct a successful campaign to meet the NEH matching requirement? What evidence does the applicant offer that the fundraising plan is feasible? Will the fundraising strategy broaden the base of institutional support?

As noted above, before they submit a proposal applicants are strongly encouraged to contact program officers, who can offer advice about preparing the proposal and the review process. Program officers can also review draft proposals, which are optional. Program officers' comments on draft proposals are not part of the formal review process and have no bearing on

the final outcome of the proposal, but previous applicants have found them helpful in strengthening their applications.

Prospective applicants who wish to submit a preliminary draft proposal should do so at least four (preferably six) weeks before the application deadline. (Although staff will make every effort to review all drafts submitted, time constraints may prevent thorough review of drafts submitted less than four weeks before the deadline.) The preliminary draft should include the full narrative section of the application and the proposed budget. Drafts should not be submitted through Grants.gov, but directly to NEH by e-mail attachment (the preferred method) to challenge@neh.gov.

Application elements

An application should consist of the following parts.

1. **Table of contents**

List all parts of the application, with page numbers. Please use one set of page numbers for the entire document, including the appendices.

2. **Abstract**

Summarize the proposal, including the activities to be supported and the plans for raising funds for matching. Applicants should describe the significance to the humanities of what they are proposing. This summary may be single-spaced but should not exceed one page. In addition, supply the grants officer who will submit the application with an abridged version of the abstract (limited to a thousand characters, including spaces) for him or her to include in the Project Description field of the Application for Federal Domestic Assistance – Short Organizational (part of the application package that must be submitted to Grants.gov).

3. **Narrative**

Narrative descriptions are limited to **ten double-spaced pages**. The font size should be no smaller than eleven-point. All pages should have at least one-inch margins, be collated, and numbered consecutively throughout. Statistical and other supporting materials may be relegated to appendices. The narrative should provide a clear, logical, and concise description of the activities that the challenge grant will support.

In the narrative, the applicant should do the following:

- Describe the **significance and intellectual quality** of the humanities activities, programs, and holdings that the challenge grant would support. Explain why these activities are important, and to whom. Describe or provide evidence of the quality of the humanities activities to be supported, such as letters from outside experts in the field. (The letters should be provided in an appendix.)

- Applications to sustain existing scholarly infrastructure must make a strong case for why their project should be sustained. For example, applicants might describe in detail the number of users of their project on a monthly or annual basis. They might also provide evidence of the impact of their project (in an appendix) via letters of support, citations from books or articles, or other means.
- Applications to share collections should explain how the humanities will be advanced as a result of the project (including, where relevant, the provision of ancillary materials or programming to participating institutions).
- Describe the institution's **long-range plans** for advancing and/or disseminating humanistic knowledge. Explain how the institution, through its mission, personnel, governance, facilities, and resources, is capable of sustaining outstanding humanities activities. Identify any collaborators or partners and provide in an appendix evidence, such as letters indicating institutional commitment to the long-range plans and the challenge grant.
- Discuss the **impact** of the challenge grant. Explain how grant funds will strengthen and improve knowledge and understanding of the humanities. Explain how the NEH challenge grant will sustain and enhance significant humanities activities over the long term. Delineate clearly and in detail the planned challenge grant expenditures (federal and nonfederal combined). Provide a plan for assessing, in both qualitative and quantitative terms as appropriate, the impact of the grant.
- Describe the **audience** to be served and how it will benefit from the project.
- Describe the **plans for raising funds** to meet the NEH matching requirement. Offer evidence of long-term financial stability at the institution. Explain how the institution's resources, leadership, staff, and experience will enable it to conduct a successful campaign. Give details of the fundraising strategy; explain its feasibility and how it will broaden the base of institutional support.

Applicants should also briefly describe any recent NEH or state humanities council grants received by the institution, as well as any pending NEH applications related to the activities that the challenge grant would support. If the applicant holds or is currently applying for any NEH grants that include a matching component, describe these (including the amount of the match) in the section of the narrative that discusses the feasibility of fundraising.

NOTE: Applicants who have held prior NEH challenge grants must describe and assess the impact of their prior award(s), especially in cases where the new grant would support humanities activities similar to those supported by the prior grant(s).

4. Challenge grant budget

Do **not** use the standard NEH budget form. Instead, provide a carefully itemized one- or two-page budget describing all challenge grant funds and indicate

- the portions of the total NEH federal funds being requested in years 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the grant period (and, for HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and two-year colleges, years 5 and 6 of the grant period as well); and
- how all challenge grant funds—federal and nonfederal combined—will be expended.

For purposes of expenditure, there is no distinction between federal funds and nonfederal donations. Even if part of a larger campaign, the challenge grant budget should be limited to requested NEH funds plus the minimum required nonfederal funds. Planned annual expenditures from spend-down yield should be broken down by specific cost categories.

Direct funds may be used only for capital expenditures, the purchase of equipment or software, collections sharing, and fundraising costs (up to 10 percent of total grant funds). Operating and program expenses may be paid for only with income from a spend-down fund.

The budget should clearly indicate what the expenditures are for, and the proposal narrative should provide detailed information about these expenditures and should justify the amounts allotted to the various items in terms of the plans for the humanities.

In the following **sample** budgets, only one mode of expenditure is included for purposes of illustration only; applicants should propose only the mode of expenditure appropriate to their planned humanities activities.

Sample challenge grant budget for a direct expenditure project (building renovation): all figures and categories of expenditure are for illustrative purposes only.

Total NEH funds requested:		\$300,000
Year 1:	\$25,000	
Year 2:	\$100,000	
Year 3:	\$100,000	
Year 4:	\$75,000	
Total nonfederal contributions		\$900,000
Total grant funds (NEH plus match)		\$1,200,000

Planned Expenditures:

Direct

Renovation (include details of the planned renovation)	\$1,200,000
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Sample challenge grant budget for applications submitted by an HBCU, Tribal College or University, or two-year college for a spend-down fund: all figures and categories of expenditure are for illustrative purposes only.

Total NEH funds requested:	\$300,000
Year 1:	\$70,000
Year 2:	\$80,000
Year 3:	\$80,000
Year 4:	\$70,000
 Total nonfederal contributions	 \$300,000
 Total grant funds (NEH plus match)	 \$600,000

Planned Expenditures:

Spend-down fund

Principal	\$600,000
Rate of expendable return	5%
Number of years	10
Annual expenditure (income + principal)	\$77,702
Uses of spend-down funds (list all)	
Treatment of objects to be conserved	\$27,702
Enhancement of treatment facilities	\$50,000

BUDGETARY NOTES

Calculating a spend-down fund

The amount needed for a spend-down fund depends upon the projected rate of return on investment, the length of the fund’s existence, and the amount to be spent each year. Spend-down funds must last for at least five years but not more than ten years.

The amount needed can be calculated using a tool—such as the PV financial function in Microsoft Excel—that calculates the “present value” of funds needed to allow the desired expenditure over the specified number of future years. To calculate the expendable annual income over the life of the fund, use Excel’s PMT financial function.

Indirect costs

These are costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be readily identified with a specific project or activity of an organization. Items that would be regarded as indirect costs include the salaries of executive officers, the costs of operating and maintaining facilities, local telephone service, office supplies, and accounting and legal services.

Indirect costs are computed by applying a federally negotiated indirect-cost rate to a distribution base (usually the direct costs of the project). **If your institution already has a federally negotiated indirect-cost rate, please indicate on your budget the rate, the base, the name of the agency with which you negotiated, and the date of that agreement.**

Organizations that wish to include overhead charges in the budget but do **not** have a current federally negotiated indirect-cost rate or have not submitted a pending indirect-cost proposal to a federal agency may choose one of the following options:

1. NEH will not require the formal negotiation of an indirect-cost rate, provided that the charge for indirect costs does not exceed the governmentwide rate of up to 10 percent of direct costs, less distorting items (including but not limited to capital expenditures, participant stipends, fellowships, and the portion of each individual subgrant or subcontract in excess of \$25,000). This option is not available to sponsorship (umbrella) organizations. Applicants choosing this option should understand that they must maintain documentation to support overhead charges claimed as part of project costs.
2. If your organization wishes to use a rate higher than 10 percent, provide an estimate of the indirect-cost rate and the charges on the budget form. If the application is approved for funding, the award document will explain how to negotiate an indirect cost rate with NEH.

If you choose one of these options, please indicate on the budget form which option you are choosing.

If the applicant institution is claiming indirect costs, submit a copy of its current federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement. Do not attach the agreement to your budget. Instead you must attach it to the Budget Narrative Attachment Form (also known as the Budget Narrative File). (See the instructions for this form in the Application Checklist near the end of this document.) Alternatively, you must attach a statement to the form, explaining a) that the applicant institution is not claiming indirect costs; b) that the applicant institution does not currently have a federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement; or c) that the applicant institution is using the governmentwide rate of up to 10 percent of the total direct costs, less distorting items (including but not limited to capital expenditures, participant stipends, fellowships, and the portion of each subgrant or subcontract in excess of \$25,000).

5. Institutional fact summary

For applications involving multiple institutional partners, only the applicant of record must provide an institutional fact summary. Partner institutions, however, are welcome to submit fact summaries to document their institutional character and humanities capacities.

Provide the following in an outline **limited to one page**:

- a. Relevant facts and statistics about the institution or organization, such as its
 - i. history;
 - ii. mission;
 - iii. governance and administration;
 - iv. physical facilities;
 - v. humanities staff size and composition (including the percentage of all staff who are in the humanities);
 - vi. humanities collections (including the percentage of all collections that are in the humanities); and
 - vii. accreditation or affiliation (if applicable).
- b. Data on recent humanities activities, such as the
 - i. types and numbers of enrollments, programs, exhibitions, courses, and degrees awarded in the past two years;
 - ii. percentage of total offerings that are in the humanities;
 - iii. size and nature of audience or population served;
 - iv. cost to participants (if any);
 - v. number of publications produced (if applicable); and
 - vi. evidence for the success of these humanities activities.

6. Financial summary

Include a one or two-page summary of the applicant institution's finances. For a suggested format, please refer to the Challenge Grants Sample Financial Summary Form; a link to it is available on the [program resource page](#). Where the application concerns a sub-unit of a larger whole (for example, a library on a university campus), include summaries for both the larger and smaller units. The purpose of the summary is to give a clear picture of the financial status of the institution during the most recent three-year period. Provide information about annual operating budgets, exclusive of capital campaigns or other special income and exclusive of current or recent capital project expenditures. Figures should be compatible with figures cited elsewhere in the proposal. *Applicants should explain significant operating surpluses or deficits in accompanying notes.*

7. **Lists of trustees and staff**

Provide a list of the institution's board of governors or trustees with their professional affiliations and a list of staff and faculty members principally involved with the challenge grant, indicating their professional qualifications.

8. **Résumés and job descriptions**

The project director is the person primarily responsible for implementing the humanities activities described in the narrative proposal. Attach a two-page version of this person's résumé as an appendix to the application. Résumés or job descriptions for any position being supported by the challenge grant should also be attached.

9. **Letters of commitment and support**

Include in an appendix letters of commitment or support from appropriate institutional officials, confirming the institution's commitment to the humanities activities and to meeting the NEH challenge. Other letters of support, such as from partners, scholars in the field, staff involved in carrying out the humanities activities, and participants in or beneficiaries of the humanities activities, should be included as appropriate. Letters from the applicant's Congressional representatives or Senators are not needed for a challenge grant application.

10. **Planning and design documentation**

Include in an appendix planning, design, and evaluation documents, such as architectural schematics, collections assessment reports, and other pertinent materials that inform and guide the proposed activities.

11. **Materials submitted (or to be submitted) to the State Historic Preservation Officer or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (for projects involving the construction, restoration, or renovation of facilities)**

If you are applying for a project involving the construction, restoration, or renovation of facilities, in the application you need only submit the materials that you have submitted or will submit to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO). You can find additional information about these materials (and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires the submission of these materials) in a document on the [program resource page](#). Below you will find a brief description of the federal laws with which grantees for construction projects must comply.

All NEH-funded projects involving construction, renovation, repair, rehabilitation, or ground and visual disturbances must comply with federal laws on wage rates, disability rights, and historic preservation. Such projects may therefore require extra documentation as well as an extra review before NEH can release any federal funds. Applicants should familiarize themselves with the requirements described below; **NEH cannot release any grant funds until these federal requirements are met.**

I. Davis-Bacon Requirements

Institutions using NEH challenge grant funds, federal or nonfederal, for construction and renovation projects must comply with the [Davis-Bacon Act](#). If the challenge grant includes support for any part of a construction or renovation project, the entire project is subject to Davis-Bacon requirements, and applicants must take into account the effect of the Davis-Bacon Act on costs. For purposes of compliance with the Davis-Bacon Act, there is no distinction between federal funds and nonfederal donations raised for matching. Additional information is available [here](#). Applicants for construction projects should affirm in the proposal that they will meet the requirements of the Davis-Bacon Act.

II. Americans with Disabilities Act

Article 26 (e) of NEH's General Terms and Conditions for Awards requires grant recipients and subrecipients to adhere to the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#) (ADA). Title III of the ADA covers places of public accommodation (such as museums, libraries, and educational institutions) and includes a specific section regarding new construction and alterations in public accommodations. The website www.ada.gov provides comprehensive information that grantees can consult concerning compliance with the ADA, including the text of the legislation, the revised regulations implementing Title II and Title III of the ADA, and the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

III. National Historic Preservation Act

All NEH-funded projects involving construction, renovation, repair, rehabilitation, or ground or visual disturbances must comply with the [National Historic Preservation Act](#) (NHPA). Applicants should familiarize themselves with Section 106 of the NHPA and its [implementing regulations](#) (PDF).

Section 106 of the NHPA: Prior to the expenditure of any federal funds, Section 106 requires NEH to review the effects of projects offered NEH funding on historic properties that are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

When applicable, NEH must also provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) an opportunity to comment on such projects **prior to the expenditure of any federal funds**.

To understand and navigate the Section 106 review process, applicants should familiarize themselves with the Section 106 materials available [here](#). There is no formula for how long a given Section 106 review may take, so applicants should build sufficient time into their project plans to allow for a potentially lengthy review. NEH does not formally initiate a Section 106 review until it offers support for a project. However, applicants should know that **an applicant offered a challenge grant cannot begin any work involving construction, renovation, repair, rehabilitation, or ground or visual disturbances—and that NEH cannot release any federal funds—until NEH concludes its Section 106 review**.

Applications for projects involving the construction, renovation, or restoration of facilities must include the materials submitted or that will be submitted to the SHPO or the THPO. Applications for such projects that do not include these materials will automatically be disqualified.

12. Optional appendices

Applicants may include PDF versions of printed brochures, flyers, or other descriptive materials and may refer to them in the text of the narrative.

III. Submitting your Application

To be able to submit an application, applicants must have registered with Grants.gov and must have an updated Entity record in the System for Award Management (SAM). More detailed information is immediately below.

All applications to this program must be submitted via Grants.gov. NEH strongly recommends that you complete or verify your registration at least two weeks before the application deadline, since it takes time to process your registration.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires federal agencies to make information about the expenditure of tax funds available to the public. To facilitate this, the applicant organization must maintain current information in its Entity record in the System for Award Management (SAM). You must therefore review and update the information in your organization's Entity record at least annually after the initial registration, and more frequently if required by changes in your organization's information or another award term. In order for your organization to apply for an award via Grants.gov, receive an award, or receive payment on an award, the information in its Entity record must be current. You can update your organization's Entity record [here](#). You may need a new SAM User Account to register or update your organization's Entity record. NEH strongly recommends that applicant organizations update (or, if necessary, create) their SAM Entity records at least four weeks before the application deadline.

You can find links to the Grants.gov application package and instructions for preparing and submitting the forms included in the package on the [program resource page](#).

Be sure to read the [document](#) (PDF) that explains how to confirm that you successfully submitted your application. It is your responsibility as an applicant to confirm that Grants.gov and subsequently NEH have accepted your application.

How to submit supplementary materials

If you are sending supplementary materials, such as copies of materials submitted to the SHPO/THPO, include in your Grants.gov submission a list of the materials to be sent separately.

Clearly identify the applicant on each separate supplemental item as well as on the envelope, box, or other mailer. The supplemental materials must arrive at NEH by the deadline, March 15, 2018.

Supplementary materials should be sent by a commercial delivery service to ensure that they arrive by the receipt deadline. NEH continues to experience lengthy delays in the delivery of mail by the U.S. Postal Service.

If you wish to have the materials returned to you, please include a self-addressed, pre-paid mailer.

Send the materials to:

Division of Preservation and Access
National Endowment for the Humanities
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20506
202-606-8309

Deadlines for submitting optional draft proposals and applications

Draft proposals (optional): The staff recommends that draft proposals be submitted no later than four (and preferably six) weeks before the application deadline, if not earlier. Time constraints may prevent staff from reviewing drafts submitted after that date. Draft proposals may be submitted by e-mail attachment (challenge@neh.gov).

Grants.gov must receive applications on or before March 15, 2018. Grants.gov will date- and time-stamp applications after they are fully uploaded. Grants.gov will not accept applications submitted after that date. **Supplementary materials must also arrive at NEH by the deadline—that is, March 15, 2018—to be considered as part of the application.**

IV. What Happens After the Submission of an Application

Review and selection process

Knowledgeable persons outside NEH will read each application and advise the agency about its merits. NEH staff comments on matters of fact or on significant issues that otherwise would be missing from these reviews, then makes recommendations to the National Council on the Humanities. The National Council meets at various times during the year to advise the NEH chairman on grants. The chairman takes into account the advice provided by the review process

and, by law, makes all funding decisions. More details about NEH's review process are available [here](#).

Prior to making an award, NEH will conduct a risk assessment of successful applicants, consistent with Uniform Guidance [§200.205](#). (See four paragraphs below the next heading for more information about the Uniform Guidance provided by the Office of Management and Budget.) This assessment guards against the risk that federal financial assistance might be wasted, used fraudulently, or abused. Based on its risk assessment, NEH will include in the award documents specific conditions designed to mitigate the effects of the risk.

Information for all applicants and for successful applicants

In early August 2018, approximately five months after the application deadline, NEH will notify applicants by e-mail whether they will be offered a challenge grant. Institutional grants administrators and project directors of successful applications will receive offer letters in September 2018, accompanied by documents explaining the terms of the offer, matching instructions, and the matching schedule. Once an award is made (after the certification of the first funds raised from nonfederal third parties), awardees will receive additional documents identifying the relevant terms, conditions, and administrative requirements that pertain to successful applications. The [Grant Management](#) section of the NEH website outlines all the responsibilities of award recipients, including anti-lobbying restrictions, in great detail. Applicants may obtain the evaluations of their applications by sending an e-mail message to challenge@neh.gov.

More detailed information on eligible gifts and the mechanics of challenge grant administration can be found in the booklet [Administration of NEH Challenge Grants](#). Applicants should download this document if they plan to solicit and collect eligible matching gifts in anticipation of receiving an NEH challenge grant. For a brief overview of important issues involved in administering an NEH challenge grant, see [Challenge Grants Do's and Don'ts](#).

The requirements for awards are contained in the [Administration of NEH Challenge Grants](#), the [General Terms and Conditions for Awards](#) (see exclusions in Appendix 4 of the Administration of NEH Challenge Grants), the audit requirements discussed in Subpart F of the [Office of Management and Budget Uniform Administrative Guidance document](#), the [Program-Specific Audit Guide for Recipients of an NEH Challenge Grant](#), and in any specific terms and conditions contained in the offer letter.

In September 2015 NEH adopted without exception a new government-wide regulation for federal awards, referred to as the "Uniform Guidance." The Uniform Guidance applies to all NEH awards to organizations and is aimed at reducing the administrative burden on award recipients and improving accountability of federal financial assistance for tax payers. (See 2 C.F.R. Part 200: [UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR FEDERAL AWARDS](#).) NEH will identify in each grantee's award documents the relevant terms, conditions, and administrative requirements from the Uniform Guidance with which the grantee must comply.

Help NEH eliminate fraud and improve management by providing information about allegations or suspicions of waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement, research misconduct

(fabrication, falsification, plagiarism), or unnecessary government expenditures, during the period of award performance, to the NEH Office of the Inspector General. You can find details on how to report such allegations and suspicions [here](#).

V. Additional Information

Contact information for the program and Grants.gov

If you have questions about the program, contact:

Division of Preservation and Access
National Endowment for the Humanities
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20506
202-606-8309
challenge@neh.gov

If you need help using Grants.gov, refer to

Grants.gov: www.grants.gov
Grants.gov help desk: support@grants.gov
Grants.gov training documents and videos:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html>
Grants.gov support line: 1-800-518-GRANTS (4726)

Privacy policy

Information in these guidelines is solicited under the authority of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, as amended, 20 U.S.C. 956. The principal purpose for which the information will be used is to process the grant application. The information may also be used for statistical research, analysis of trends, and Congressional oversight. Failure to provide the information may result in the delay or rejection of the application.

Application completion time

The Office of Management and Budget requires federal agencies to supply information on the time needed to complete forms and also to invite comments on the paperwork burden. NEH estimates that the average time to complete this application is fifteen hours per response. This estimate includes time for reviewing instructions, researching, gathering, and maintaining the information needed, and completing and reviewing the application.

Please send any comments regarding the estimated completion time or any other aspect of this application, including suggestions for reducing the completion time, to the Chief Guidelines Officer, at guidelines@neh.gov; the Office of Publications, National Endowment for the

Humanities, Washington, DC 20506; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (3136-0134), Washington, DC 20503. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- **Verify and if necessary update your institution’s Entity record, or create an Entity record for your institution, at the System for Award Management (SAM).** Complete at least four weeks before the deadline.
- **Verify your institution’s registration or register your institution with Grants.gov.** Complete at least two weeks before deadline.
- **Using Grants.gov Workspace, fill out the application forms online or download and fill out the PDFs of the forms.** The [program resource page](#) on NEH’s website has a direct link to the package. Alternatively, you can search Grants.gov for this program. The program resource page also has a direct link to the instructions for completing the package.
- **Complete the following forms contained in the Grants.gov application package.**
 1. Application for Federal Domestic Assistance - Short Organizational
 2. Supplementary Cover Sheet for NEH Grant Programs
 3. Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form
 4. Attachments Form—Using this form, attach the parts of your application as described in the guidelines:
 - ATTACHMENT 1: Table of contents (name the file “contents.pdf”)
 - ATTACHMENT 2: Abstract (name the file “abstract.pdf”)
 - ATTACHMENT 3: Narrative (name the file “narrative.pdf”)
 - ATTACHMENT 4: Budget (name the file “budget.pdf”)
 - ATTACHMENT 5: One-page institutional fact summary (name the file “institutionalsummary.pdf”)
 - ATTACHMENT 6: Financial summary (name the file “financialsummary.pdf”)
 - ATTACHMENT 7: Lists of trustees and staff (name the file “trusteesstaff.pdf”)

- ATTACHMENT 8: Project director’s résumé, and the job descriptions or résumés for any positions being supported (name the file “resume.pdf”)
- ATTACHMENT 9: Letters of commitment and support (name the file “letters.pdf”)
- ATTACHMENT 10: Materials submitted or to be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer (if necessary) (name the file “SHPOmaterials.pdf”)
- ATTACHMENT 11: Planning and design documentation (name the file “planning.pdf”)
- ATTACHMENT 12: Optional appendices (name the file “appendices.pdf”)
5. Budget Narrative Attachment Form— Using this form, attach **only** a copy of your institution’s current federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement (or an explanation why you are not attaching such an agreement). (See the Grants.gov instructions for applicants, which are available on the program resource page, for additional information.)

Do not attach your application budget to the Budget Narrative Attachment Form; instead you must attach it to the Attachments Form (see above in the Application Checklist), as attachment 4.

Your attachments must be in Portable Document Format (.pdf). We cannot accept attachments in their original word processing or spreadsheet formats. If you don’t already have software to convert your files into PDFs, many low-cost and free software packages will do so. You can learn more about converting documents into PDFs [here](#).

Upload your application to Grants.gov. NEH **strongly** suggests that you submit your application no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the day of the deadline. Doing so will leave you time to contact the Grants.gov help desk for support, should you encounter a technical problem of some kind. The Grants.gov help desk is now available seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day (except on [federal holidays](#)), at 1-800-518-4726. You can also send an e-mail message to support@grants.gov.

Be sure to read the [document](#) (PDF) that explains how to confirm that you successfully submitted your application. It is your responsibility as an applicant to confirm that Grants.gov and subsequently NEH have accepted your application.

TIMELINE

October 1, 2017: Date prior to the March 15, 2018 deadline from which advance fundraising may count toward the matching requirement.

Until March 15, 2018: Contact Preservation & Access staff at 202-606-8309 or at challenge@neh.gov with questions and for advice (optional)

February 1-15, 2018: Submit draft application (optional) within this range of dates

February 15, 2018: Create or verify your institution's Entity record at the System for Award Management by this date

March 1, 2018: Register your institution (or verify its registration) with Grants.gov by this date

March 15, 2018: Submit application through Grants.gov (and, if applicable, supplementary materials directly to NEH) by this date

April 2018: Peer review panels take place

July 2018: meeting of the National Council on the Humanities, followed by funding decisions

August 2018: applicants are notified of the funding decisions

September 2018: institutional grants administrators and project directors of successful applications receive offer letters by e-mail

May 31: annual date after notification by which the grantee must submit certification of the gifts required to claim the year's installment of federal funds