



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

Common Heritage

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the humanities?

According to the 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and the 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 definition of “community” is used in this grant program?

The Common Heritage program considers a community to be a city or town (or a part of a city or town) that has been strongly shaped by geographical and historical forces. Members of the public in that community may have diverse family histories and heritage, or they may share a historical, cultural, or linguistic heritage. Applicants should describe the community that they propose to bring together for a heritage event. Describe plans to have community members bring various cultural heritage materials to the heritage event.

What expenses will Common Heritage grants cover?

Allowable expenses include the cost of flatbed and overhead scanners, digital cameras, preservation supplies for protecting cultural heritage items, and computers to assist the digitization and creation of metadata. Preservation enclosures may be purchased and given to members of the public to help them protect photographs and documents. Grant funds will also cover fees for the staff of libraries, museums, and other collecting institutions to conduct the digitization. Because of the cost of equipment and staffing, applicants should work with local institutions to put together a combination of purchased and borrowed or donated equipment and staff time that meets their needs and stays within the maximum award amount of \$12,000. Equipment for public events, such as projectors and amplification systems, may not be purchased with grant funds; however, costs for renting such equipment, as well as rental of space for the heritage event, are allowed. Grant funds may also be used for honoraria for humanities advisors and public programs presenters.

Are all expenses of the events covered by Common Heritage grants?

No. The costs of food and refreshment at the events are not covered by grants.

Is an applicant institution required to contribute funds from its own budget to the Common Heritage grant?

No. Cost sharing is not required for Common Heritage grants.

What standards or practices should be followed for digitization, metadata creation, and making digital objects accessible on a long-term basis?

The cultural heritage community has recently developed practical guidelines for doing this type of work. The following resources offer some specific recommendations for technical details, such as file formats, scanning resolution, and metadata requirements to ensure that digital objects can be easily discovered. These resources also provide information about options for scanning equipment and imaging software, as well as guidance on preserving digital files. Several of the resources have been created by state-based digital library repositories. See, for example,

- Portal to Texas History, "[Technology](#)";
- Digital Library of Georgia, "[Digitization Guide](#)"; and
- Minnesota Historical Society, "[Digital Imaging for the Small Organization](#)" (PDF).

If possible, metadata for digital objects created during digitization work supported by Common Heritage grants should be standardized. Applicants are encouraged to contribute digitized resources to regional or national digital collections, such as the digital libraries that exist in many states (see this list of [State Digital Resources maintained by the Library of Congress](#)) or the Digital Public Library of America (see [DPLA Community Reps](#)).

Where can I find information about preservation enclosures and the handling of original materials?

The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) and the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) provide practical advice on the care of original materials. The following web pages are particularly relevant to this grant program:

- CCAHA, "[Collections Handling Essentials](#)" (PDF);
- CCAHA, "[Selecting Storage Materials](#)" (PDF);
- CCAHA, "[Housing Materials for Photographs: Criteria for Selection](#)" (PDF);
- NEDCC, "[Storage Enclosures for Books and Artifacts on Paper](#)"; and
- CCAHA, "[Photocopying Guidelines](#)" (PDF).

How can our organization identify or develop appropriate humanities topics for public programs associated with our project?

You can get advice or consultation for developing humanities topics from humanities specialists in your community, or from other persons knowledgeable about your community. For example, humanities specialists at local historical societies, schools, community colleges, and universities can help identify humanities topics or serve as guest lecturers.

Can Common Heritage grants support preservation workshops?

Yes, you may propose a public program that explores preservation topics relevant to local history. For example, you may organize a public program on appropriate preservation practices for historic photographic media, a workshop on the appropriate care and handling of paper documents, or an interactive session about personal digital archiving practices. Common Heritage grants may not, however, support genealogy workshops.

Who will read my grant application?

Outside evaluators usually include preservation professionals, museum curators, librarians, archivists, administrators of cultural organizations, and public humanities researchers. 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](#).

Are NEH staff members available to answer questions about an application?

Yes. Applicants may contact the staff to discuss applications prior to submission; however, the staff is not able to read draft proposals. Staff of the Division of Preservation and Access may be reached at 202-606-8570 or preservation@neh.gov.

My organization's application for a Common Heritage grant was unsuccessful last year. How may I increase my chances for success next time?

You may request copies of the evaluators' comments. A revised application should take into consideration the issues that they raised. Note, though, that the resubmitted application will be reviewed by persons who will not have knowledge of or access to the previous application.