

FAQs In the Event of Interpersonal Conflict at NEH-Funded Seminars, Institutes and Workshops: What You Need to Know

1. Who is responsible for conducting an NEH-funded Seminar, Institute, or Workshop?

The award recipient. Per the NEH General Terms and Conditions, the “award recipient” or “grantee”—i.e., the institution that applied for and received NEH funds—has “full responsibility” for conducting project activities under an NEH award, including the management and administration of an NEH-funded Seminar, Institute, or Workshop.

2. Does this mean that an award recipient may conduct the Seminar, Institute, or workshop any way it chooses?

No. Although a grantee has discretion in conducting a Seminar, Institute, or Workshop, it must do so consistent with the scope of the proposal approved by NEH for funding. Grantees must otherwise comply with the terms and conditions that govern the award, as well as the Office of Management and Budget’s Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. See [NEH General Terms & Conditions](#) & [OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements](#).

3. NEH Seminars, Institutes, and Workshops often include participants of diverse backgrounds. What laws should award recipients be aware of in this regard?

Those prohibiting discrimination within federally-assisted programs. As explained in the NEH General Terms and Conditions, federal law prohibits those receiving NEH funding for a Seminar, Institute, or Workshop from excluding participation in, denying the benefits of the program to, or otherwise discriminating against, any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

4. Who is responsible for ensuring compliance with federal anti-discrimination laws?

The award recipient. The award recipient is solely responsible for ensuring compliance with the laws referenced above, and in this regard, is responsible for the conduct of its employees and others it hires to administer an NEH-funded Seminar, Institute, or Workshop.

Should NEH determine that a grantee has violated these laws, it may suspend or terminate a grant. In addition, Seminar, Institute, and Workshop participants may seek redress before an award recipient’s equal opportunity/civil rights office or seek judicial relief if they believe they have been subject to discrimination.

5. What if certain Seminar, Institute, and Workshop participants engage in allegedly racist, sexist, ageist, or ableist conduct that offends, insults, or demeans other participants? Is the grantee responsible for this behavior?

It depends on the facts of the conflict. The grantee may be responsible for offensive participant behavior where it ignores it and where the behavior is so severe or pervasive as to effectively deny the other participants access to the Seminar’s, Institute’s, or Workshop’s benefits.

6. What can a grantee do to foster an inclusive environment and atmosphere of respect?

Incorporate the NEH Principles of Civility for NEH Seminars, Institutes, and Workshops into its project. See [NEH Principles of Civility](#). Those principles encourage an ethos of openness and respect and specifically require that presentations and discussions be

1. firmly grounded in rigorous scholarship and thoughtful analysis;
2. conducted without partisan advocacy;
3. respectful of divergent views;
4. free of ad hominem commentary; and
5. devoid of ethnic, religious, gender, disability, or racial bias.

7. How can a grantee enforce the above principles?

By requiring professional and respectful behavior as a condition to Seminar, Institute, or Workshop participation. As stated above, the award recipient has “full responsibility” for conducting project activities, including monitoring and governing the conduct of project participants. NEH encourages award recipients to condition participation in NEH-funded Seminars, Institutes, and Workshops on good behavior and to reserve the right to dismiss project participants for egregious and repeated unprofessional conduct as well as disruptive and threatening behavior.

8. What about disputes between grantees and their employees or those grantees hire to administer NEH-funded Seminars, Institutes, and Workshops? Does NEH have any role in such conflicts?

No. By law, NEH may not exercise direction, supervision, or control over the policy determination, personnel, curriculum and administration of non-federal organizations. See [20 U.S.C. § 953](#).

Keep in mind, however, that per the NEH General Terms and Conditions, an award recipient may not remove a project director or certain other “key personnel” without NEH’s prior written approval. That said, NEH does not otherwise have authority to dictate personnel decisions to a grantee.

9. What if an individual alleges that a grantee engaged in employment discrimination in connection with an NEH-funded Seminar, Institute, or Workshop? Who should address that dispute?

Either the award recipient’s equal opportunity/civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has principal authority for administering those laws that prohibit discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, and disability. See <https://www.eeoc.gov>.

NEH has limited authority in this context as laws barring discrimination in federally-assisted programs usually do not cover employment within the program, unless: (1) a main purpose of the program is to provide employment; (2) discrimination in employment could cause discrimination in program benefits or services; or (3) an individual alleges discrimination in employment on the basis of disability.