



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE  
**Humanities**

DIVISION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS

**MEDIA PROJECTS:  
DEVELOPMENT AND  
PRODUCTION GRANTS**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**1. Humanities content and advisers**

**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 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?**

As a general rule, the earlier scholars are involved in a project, the better. Projects recommended for funding are usually ones in which scholars have helped 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 search for scholarly books related to your project. [State humanities councils](#) often maintain lists of scholars who have participated in public programs. You can also contact professional associations or consult published directories of scholars. Finally, examine the samples of funded projects available on the program resource pages (for [Development grants](#) and [Production grants](#)) to see what kinds of scholars have participated in other projects.

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

There is no set fee for scholars and other professionals working on your 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.

## **2. General information on media grants**

### **What do Media Projects grants support?**

Media Projects grants support film, radio, and television projects for general audiences that encourage active engagement with humanities ideas through creative storytelling approaches. Although NEH no longer offers the separate Bridging Cultures through Film: International Topics grant opportunity, NEH continues to encourage humanities media projects that examine international themes and subjects and spark Americans' engagement with the broader world by exploring countries and cultures outside of the United States.

### **What advice do you have for media producers in putting forth a strong application?**

The project itself must fall within the fields of the humanities and accord with the [purpose and goals of NEH](#). NEH does not give general support for media programs but seeks to fund those

programs that will best bring the issues and approaches of the humanities, and humanities research, to broad public audiences.

It is helpful to review samples of successful applications. These samples will give you models that can help you compose your application. Sample narratives from successful applications are available on the program resource pages of the [Development Grants](#) and [Production Grants](#) programs.

A list of recent awards made by Media Projects: Development Grants can be found [here](#). A list of recent awards made by Media Projects: Production Grants can be found [here](#). These lists can give you an idea of the types of projects that are eligible for NEH support.

### **What is the most common mistake applicants make?**

Applicants, especially first-time applicants, often fail to provide as much information as evaluators expect. Applicants must discuss the project in considerable detail, articulating clearly their concept for the project and the humanities issues that the project reflects, even when the proposal is for a development grant. Media producers should have done considerable research on the subject and consulted with scholars about their ideas; they should also explain the scholars' contributions in the proposal. In addition, do not assume that evaluators will be aware of your previous work; instead, be sure to provide a full description of any previous experience that strengthens your current request for a grant.

### **What advice do you give media producers who have less experience but have worthy humanities projects?**

Less experienced applicants frequently find it advantageous to form a partnership with a more seasoned media team.

### **If I am an individual producer unaffiliated with a nonprofit organization, may I still receive a Media Projects grant?**

No. Media Projects grants are awarded only to U.S. nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations, state and local governmental agencies, and federally recognized Native American tribal governments. But many cultural organizations, media arts centers, public radio stations, public television stations, and universities serve as sponsors of the projects of independent producers and may be willing to sponsor your project. Independent producers who wish to apply for NEH funding must have obtained sponsorship by an eligible organization. The sponsoring organization is responsible for submitting the application to NEH. Please contact a program officer for a list of recent grantees, which includes examples of nonprofit organizations that were awarded grants. For further information on the specific responsibilities of sponsorship organizations, please see [Requirements for Grant Recipients that Serve as Sponsors of Projects](#).

### **What distinguishes a production grant application from a development grant application?**

More research should have been completed for a production grant application, and the project should be described in greater detail in the application. These applications should convey a solid command of the relevant humanities scholarship, the program's narrative elements, and the

creative approach. All production proposals require a detailed program treatment for a radio project, or a script for a film or television project. Development applications do not need to be worked out to the same extent; nevertheless, they need to describe the intellectual themes, storyline, and audio or visual approach in enough detail so that the evaluators can see the merits of the project.

### **Will this grant fund resources for students and teachers?**

Projects should be geared mainly for public audiences, and the project budget and activities should reflect this focus on producing programs for general public audiences. However, a project 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, lesson plans, interactive games, scholarly essays, maps, and/or timelines.

### **My project is for a film that will be distributed only online. Do you support film, television, and radio projects that will be distributed only online?**

In principle, yes. Media Projects grants support film, television, and radio projects that will be distributed to the widest possible audience. If you are planning online-only distribution of a film or radio program, you will need to make the case that it will reach a broad audience.

However, if you seek support for a digital project (website, game, mobile app, or other digital product) that is not related to your film, television, or radio program, you should apply to the [Digital Projects for the Public](#) program.

## **3. Submitting an application**

### **Must I submit my application through Grants.gov?**

Yes, you must submit your application through Grants.gov. You can find links to the Grants.gov application package and the instructions for preparing and submitting the package on the program resource pages for [Development Grants](#) and [Production Grants](#). The program resource pages also link to a PDF document that explains how to confirm that Grants.gov and subsequently NEH have accepted your application.

Applicants are responsible for confirming that their applications include all the required elements and that their applications have been accepted.

### **May the same project director or producer submit an application for two different projects at the same time?**

Yes. In each application clearly explain how you would allocate your time if you were awarded more than one grant.

### **May the same project director apply for funds in two consecutive competitions?**

Yes. Applicants may even revise and resubmit a proposal that was not recommended for funding. All applicants may request the evaluators' assessments of their proposal. This information is useful as you continue working on the project and decide whether to resubmit.

### **When I apply through Grants.gov, how should I submit my sample?**

Please refer to the instructions in the guidelines under “Submitting Samples” in Section III, “Submitting your Application.” The Media Projects programs encourage applicants to submit samples by linking to a URL. You are responsible for ensuring that the link to the sample remains active and that the sample is accessible throughout the review period.

### **How do the application deadlines work? Are they receipt or postmark?**

All deadlines are receipt deadlines. ALL supporting materials must arrive at NEH or be entered into Grants.gov by these dates.

## **4. Budget and grant funds**

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

Yes. We encourage applicants to approach a range of funders, as it is unlikely that NEH can support the full costs of a single program or series of programs.

### **Do I need to have already raised money from other sources in order to be competitive for an NEH grant?**

No. But NEH policy requires that commitments for full funding for the project from all sources must be in place prior to the start of production and the release of grant funds.

## **5. Distribution**

### **What expectations does NEH have for the distribution of a project?**

NEH-funded projects should be offered for broad distribution to the widest possible audience. Although NEH does not require applicants to have a commitment for distribution when they apply, a letter of interest from a broadcaster or other distribution partner may enhance an application. Furthermore, as a taxpayer-supported federal agency, NEH endeavors to make the products of its awards available to the broadest possible audience. Our goal is for scholars, educators, students, and the American public to have ready and easy access to the wide range of NEH award products. All other considerations being equal, NEH gives preference to those projects that provide free access to the public.