



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

DIVISION OF **PRESERVATION AND ACCESS**

**PRESERVATION
ASSISTANCE GRANTS**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What expenses will a Preservation Assistance Grant cover?

The grant will cover fees for consultants and assistants (including honoraria, travel, lodging, and per diem expenses), costs for preservation supplies and furniture, environmental monitoring equipment, and workshop fees.

Does the program encourage applications from certain kinds of institutions?

Yes. The program encourages applications from small and mid-sized institutions with significant humanities collections that have never received an NEH grant. The program also encourages applications from presidentially designated institutions (Hispanic-serving institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Tribal Colleges and Universities), and from Native American tribes and Native Alaskan and Native Hawaiian organizations with significant humanities collections.

Is an institution required to contribute funds from its own budget to a Preservation Assistance Grant project?

No. Cost sharing is not required for Preservation Assistance Grants.

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. The staff can be reached at 202-606-8570 or preservation@neh.gov.

Are there lists available of previously-funded Preservation Assistance Grants?

Yes. You can find a list of recent awards [here](#).

How do I determine the length of the grant period?

All Preservation Assistance Grants are awarded for a period of eighteen months, although a grantee may complete a project in a shorter period of time. In your narrative, you should show a schedule for your project activities. You should develop and present a schedule that can accommodate unexpected delays that might be encountered during the project. If your project involves a consultant, discuss the length of time that the consultant will need to complete the proposed work.

How do I find the appropriate consultant and other preservation resources online?

It is important to match the skills and experience of the consultant to the nature of the collections and the project's activities. The links below may provide information that assists in your search for an appropriate consultant.

- The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), the national membership organization of conservation professionals, offers a free guide to conservation services on its website. Visit AIC's website at www.conservation-us.org/.
- AIC also offers a website with conservation resources entitled CoOL (Conservation Online) at <http://cool.conservation-us.org>.
- The Regional Alliance for Preservation (RAP) is composed of regional conservation and preservation centers that offer preservation information, workshops, and assessments to libraries, archives, museums, and historical organizations. The staff at these organizations can offer advice or referrals. Visit RAP's website at www.rap-arcc.org.
- The Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS), which is a division of the American Library Association, offers learning resources for managing and preserving library collections at <http://www.ala.org/alcts/about>.
- The American Alliance of Museums offers resources on standards and best practices for museum operations (including preservation) at <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices>.
- The Academy of Certified Archivists promotes fundamental standards of professional archival practice and maintains an archival consultant referral service. Visit the academy's website at www.certifiedarchivists.org.

How much should my institution pay the consultant(s)?

NEH does not recommend appropriate fees to be paid to consultants. You should discuss the proposed project in detail with the consultant and negotiate a mutually acceptable rate.

What information should the consultant provide for inclusion in the application?

A consultant must provide a two-page résumé and a letter of commitment. The letter of commitment should describe the proposed activity or activities; it should also include a detailed plan of work and budget, and a preliminary list of supplies that the consultant recommends for purchase. If the consultant is working with an advanced student or recent graduate, the letter should also identify the academic program from which the student or graduate would be selected; it should also discuss the practical experience that the student or graduate would gain from the project. In addition, the letter should indicate that the consultant is requesting additional funds, up to \$1,000, to cover the student/graduate's expenses.

How do I identify training opportunities that I might want to attend?

While you may not be able to identify a specific course that would be offered a year in advance, many institutes and educational programs make course listings available and can provide a list of program topics. You may use the current topics schedule as a guide. Alternatively, you may contact the provider to see if a similar course might be offered in the future.

How much information about my institution's humanities collections should I provide in the application?

This section is one of the most important parts of your application and should be at least one full page in length. Specific information about your collections is vital in the evaluation of your application. Please take the time to describe the humanities content of your collections, identify the categories of materials in the collections, and indicate, where pertinent, the date ranges and quantities for the majority of the items.

A good description of an archival collection, for example, might begin by stating that the collection comprises two hundred letters by a school teacher written between 1870 and 1885; twenty-four linear feet of records pertaining to a local business active from 1940 through 1970; fifty-two maps documenting the history and development of the locality; twelve volumes of birth and death records for local residents from 1860 to 1950; and nine hundred photographs from a photographic studio active during the 1930s and 1940s.

A good description of a museum collection might begin by stating that there are ten thousand objects from the early 1800s to the present, including approximately one thousand costumes and items of personal adornment, five hundred Native American baskets, four hundred agricultural implements, and hundreds of household products and furnishings.

In all cases, the description should explain why the collections have humanities significance, and what sort of humanists (for example, scholars, teachers, creators of humanities public programming) could make use of them.

If the project focuses only on a portion of the collections, briefly describe the overall collections and then provide details about the portion to be surveyed or preserved.

What should I include in my description of the way in which my institution uses its collections for humanities research, education, or public programming?

By discussing the use of collections, applicants will help evaluators understand their importance to the humanities. Please be specific. For example, if the collections have been featured in an exhibition about the history of your community, list the exhibition's main topics and the time period covered. If the collections have been used by teachers in the classroom, indicate the lessons that featured the collections. If the collections are available for research, describe the range of subjects that have been or could be explored.

A previous preservation survey has indicated that my institution needs to improve the environment for its humanities collections. Is funding available for the purchase and installation of climate control equipment?

Preservation Assistance Grants may not be used to support the installation or improvement of building systems, such as climate control, security, or fire protection systems. Applicants seeking support to plan or implement sustainable preservation approaches to climate control, storage and collections management, security, or fire protection should consider the [Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections](#) grants program.

What do you mean by “preventive conservation strategies that pragmatically balance effectiveness, cost, and environmental impact”?

Preventive conservation involves managing relative humidity, temperature, light, and pollutants in collection spaces; providing protective storage enclosures and systems for collections; and safeguarding collections from theft and from natural and man-made disasters.

We encourage sustainable approaches to preventive conservation, which will vary depending on the nature of an institution and its collections, and its location and climate zone. Some examples include

- understanding your collections, their conditions, and the particular risks that they face, rather than relying on ideal and prescriptive targets;
- understanding the characteristics and performance of the building in which your collections are housed, its envelope and its systems, and their role in moderating interior environmental conditions;
- considering the impact of the local climate on establishing relative humidity and temperature setpoints and managing interior environmental conditions;
- weighing initial and ongoing energy use, the cost, and the environmental impact of potential preservation strategies;
- looking first for passive (that is, nonmechanical) ways to improve and manage collection environments; and
- developing solutions tailored to the capabilities of the organization and its staff.

What is the difference between the Preservation Assistance Grants (PAG) program and the Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections (SCHC) program?

Both programs support preventive conservation, but they differ significantly in scope. PAG is mainly directed at small and mid-sized libraries, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions that seek to improve their ability to preserve and care for their humanities collections. In a typical project a single consultant offers basic advice on caring for humanities collections. The PAG program also supports the purchase of preservation supplies and staff training. The maximum award amount is \$7,000.

The SCHC program, on the other hand, focuses on the challenge of preserving large and diverse holdings of humanities materials for future generations through sustainable conservation measures that mitigate deterioration and prolong the useful life of collections. A hallmark of SCHC projects is the involvement of interdisciplinary teams that might include architects, building engineers, conservation scientists, conservators, curators, archivists, and facilities managers, among others. Many SCHC projects are large and complex; applicants may request up to \$40,000 for planning grants and up to \$350,000 for implementation grants.

You can learn more about the SCHC program [here](#).

I have received funding elsewhere for a preservation assessment. On the basis of that assessment, I want to apply for a Preservation Assistance Grant to purchase storage furniture. Is this permissible?

Yes. Requests to purchase storage furniture must be based on a previous consultation with a preservation professional or on recommendations from a preservation assessment. Many applicants have had consultations or conducted assessments with support from sources—both private and governmental—other than NEH. When a proposed project is based on a prior consultation or assessment, you should provide the executive summary of the assessment report and any sections of the report relevant to the proposed activities as supporting documentation. If you have obtained advice from a preservation professional, we recommend that you include as part of the application a letter of support from that consultant.

What assistance is offered for digital collections?

Applicants may apply for general preservation assessments and consultations with professionals to assess the preservation needs of their digital collections. Through the education and training component of Preservation Assistance Grants applicants may request support for training that focuses on both preservation and access issues for digital collections. For example, an institution could apply for support to attend workshops on such topics as standards and best practices for the preservation of digital collections, or the care and handling of collections during digitization.

Preservation Assistance Grants cannot, however, support the digitization of collections. Applicants with projects focused on planning for digitization should consider the [Humanities Collections and Reference Resources](#) grant program.