



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

DIVISION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Public Humanities Projects

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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 peruse bookstores (either real or online), libraries, and Web resources to see who has published on topics 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.

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 about Public Humanities Projects (PHP) grants

How do I know whether my project is more appropriate for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) or the National Endowment for the Humanities?

If your project involves the creation of musical compositions, dance, painting, poetry, short stories, novels, or projects that focus on arts performance or training, you should apply to NEA. NEH supports projects that provide an analytical, reflective, or historical perspective on the arts.

If I am implementing a museum exhibition that will be accompanied by a website and a short film based on the exhibition, should I apply only to PHP or should I submit multiple applications to different NEH grant programs?

Many PHP projects have multiple formats. Applicants must determine the primary format for which they are requesting support and apply to the grant program most appropriate for that format. Applicants may want to consider how they will use grant funds and staff resources in determining the primary format.

In this case, the exhibition is the primary grant product. The other components enhance and broaden the exhibition content. You should probably apply to PHP and follow the PHP guidelines for describing the exhibition and related components. NEH will NOT accept multiple applications for the same project at the same deadline: for example, one application to PHP for a museum exhibition and a separate application to Media Projects to support production of a film related to the exhibition.

What if I want funding only for a single format, such as a museum exhibition?

Projects with a single format are still welcome and will be judged on their own merits.

Do I need to apply for a planning grant before I apply for an implementation grant?

No. Organizations may apply for any type of grant that is appropriate for the developmental stage of their project. Although many applicants find it beneficial to obtain planning funds before applying for implementation, it is not required.

Where should I apply if I want to produce a media project?

If you are planning to produce a radio program, film, television series, or podcast for broad regional or national distribution over broadcast media, the most appropriate program is Media Projects. (The program's development guidelines can be found [here](#), and production guidelines can be found [here](#).)

What are the most common mistakes that applicants make?

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 deals with, even when the proposal is for a planning grant. In order to be competitive, applicants 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.

What are the Positions in Public Humanities, and how are they related to PHP?

Applicants for PHP implementation grants are eligible to apply for support of Positions in Public Humanities, but applicants for PHP **planning grants** are not. Implementation applicants may request a \$60,000 supplement to their grants, to support the hiring of a recent graduate of a public humanities MA or PhD program or a recent graduate of a humanities PhD program, whose expertise would be critical to the success of the larger project. The \$60,000 would be used to support a two-year, entry-level position. The candidate selected to fill the position would be expected to strengthen the interpretive and public aspects of the PHP project by incorporating fresh ideas and perspectives. More information is available [here](#) (PDF).

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 classroom-specific hands-on activities, lesson plans, scholarly essays, maps, and/or timelines.

Are program officers available through phone or e-mail to answer questions?

Yes. Applicants are encouraged to contact us to discuss applications prior to their submission. We are also happy to look at drafts of proposals and to share samples of previously funded projects. The staff can be reached at 202-606-8269 or publicpgms@neh.gov. NEH recommends that drafts be submitted at least six weeks before the deadline, to ensure sufficient time to respond. Responses cannot be guaranteed if drafts arrive late.

3. Submitting an application

Must I submit my application through Grants.gov?

Yes, you must submit your application through 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.

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.

If I am an individual scholar, community member, or curator unaffiliated with a nonprofit organization, may I still receive a Public Humanities Projects grant?

No. Public Humanities Projects grants are awarded only to U.S. nonprofit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations, state and local governmental agencies, and federally recognized Indian tribal governments. But many cultural organizations, arts centers, and universities serve as sponsors of projects and may be willing to sponsor your project. Individuals who wish to apply for NEH funding from the PHP program must have obtained sponsorship by an eligible organization before submitting an application. 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](#).

May the same project director or institution 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 two years in a row?

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.

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 project.

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

No.

What are the differences between outright funds and matching funds? What is cost sharing?

Outright funds are awarded without being contingent on additional fund-raising.

Matching funds require a grantee to obtain nonfederal gift funds from third parties before federal funds are awarded.

Learn more about [different types of grant funding](#).

Cost sharing consists of the cash contributions made to a project by the applicant and third parties as well as third-party in-kind contributions, such as donated goods and services. Cost sharing also includes nonfederal gift money that will be raised to release federal matching funds.