



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Overview

I am the prospective project director of a Collaborative Research application. I reviewed the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), but there is so much information. Where should I start?

Partner with a research development specialist or grant administrator at your institution to work together on different parts of the application. Both parties should read the NOFO carefully, but the following points will help you get started:

- The project director should study **A1. Purpose** in the Program Description section and decide which category is the best match for your project. Compare your ideas with **D6. Funding Restrictions** to make sure you are not applying for unallowable activities or costs.
- Pay particular attention to **C3. Other Eligibility Information** as you select your project team.
- Focus on the instructions in **D2. Content and Form of Application Submission** to craft a compelling presentation of your project's significance and content. While composing the application narrative, keep the list under **E1. Review Criteria** close at hand to make sure your application responds to each of the evaluation criteria in the appropriate parts of the narrative.
- Consult **D2. Content and Form of Application Submission** to make sure all the required components and information are included and that page limits and formatting criteria have been followed.
- The institutional grant administrator is responsible for budgets, federal compliance, and proposal submission and should look closely at sections **D2. Content and Form of Application Submission**, especially the budget instructions, **D3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management**, and **F. Federal Award Administration Information**.

A. Program Description

1. Why is the program not supporting the Convenings or Scholarly Digital Projects categories available in recent years?

This year the program is being restricted to two project categories (Manuscript Preparation and Planning International Collaboration) due to resource limitations.

2. May I apply to the Manuscript Preparation category for support of my work on a digital publication?

No. The Manuscript Preparation category only supports projects leading to print publication. See **D6. Funding Restrictions**.

3. I'm a scholar of education, but the Funding Restrictions prohibit projects aimed at developing teaching theories or assessing educational impact. How do I know if my project is eligible?

While the program does not support projects aimed at developing curricula, teaching methods, or teaching theories, or projects that assess the impact of an educational program or curriculum, it can support a project aimed at studying the history or sociology of education more broadly. If you are uncertain if your project is eligible, consult with NEH staff before applying (email collaborative@neh.gov).

B. Award Information

1. We plan to apply for a period of performance of 18 months under the Manuscript Preparation category. May we request \$200,000 in funding?

No. In the Manuscript Preparation category, periods of performance that include partial years must be prorated by month. Therefore, the maximum amount you may request for 18 months is \$150,000 (\$100,000 for the maximum of one year of funding, plus \$50,000 for half of the maximum of a second year of funding).

2. When should the performance period end for a Manuscript Preparation project?

Your period of performance must be at least one year and no more than three years, but it should end when you submit the manuscript to the publisher, even if there will likely be subsequent revisions after peer review. You cannot predict how long it will take to receive readers' reports, or the extent of required revisions. In addition, the aim of the Collaborative Research program is to support the most intensive period of collaborative research and writing necessary to produce the manuscript.

C. Eligibility

1. Does a scholar need to have an advanced degree such as a PhD to serve as a project director for a Collaborative Research grant?

No, but the project director's résumé should include evidence (publications, presentations, and other related experience) that demonstrates his or her ability to carry out the project as

proposed. Note also that a degree candidate may not be the project director, project co-director, or sole collaborator.

2. May our team include a scholarly collaborator from another country?

Yes, and NEH requires at least one scholar not based in the U.S. for Planning International Collaboration applications. You may compensate international collaborators with NEH funds as consultants, but you cannot pass NEH funds on to foreign institutions. Note also that a scholar at a U.S. institution must contribute significantly to the project. See **C3. Other Eligibility Information**.

3. Can I serve as a project co-director if I am enrolled in a degree-granting program but already hold a PhD? I am working on an additional master's degree in another unrelated field.

No. If you are enrolled in a degree-granting program of any kind at the time of application, you may not be the project director, project co-director, or the sole collaborator. You may, however, serve in other roles on the project team.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. How important is the format of the application?

Applications must follow the format provided in the NOFO. **NEH will not review applications that violate the formatting instructions, including page limits.** Be aware that converting documents from Word to PDF format can alter the number of pages. If the PDF submitted exceeds the mandatory page limit for that attachment, the application will be ruled ineligible. We strongly recommend that the project director doublecheck the final PDF of each attachment for page length immediately prior to submission.

2. What constitutes a good title for my project?

Your title should be descriptive of the project, substantive, and free of specialized language. It should be easily understood by the general public. Omit technical terms, jargon, and unfamiliar words. Avoid a title that requires clarification by a subtitle.

For example, "A History of Counterfeiting in the U.S., 1776-1900" is clearer than "Fakes and Fakers: A History of Counterfeiting in the U.S."

When possible, include places and dates indicating a project's scope. For example, "Faith and Belief among New York City Catholics, 1945-1970" is clearer than "Faith and Belief in the Catholic Community."

If you mention a person in your title, include dates and a description. For example, "A Biography of German Philosopher Klaus von Guberstopper (1834-1910)" is clearer than "A Biography of Klaus von Guberstopper."

NEH reserves the right to re-title funded projects that do not follow agency guidelines. Award recipients may use their preferred title for any award products.

3. Our project description runs over the 1,000-character and space limitation on the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance - Short Organizational. Is that acceptable?

No. Anything that is over the character and space limitations in both the project title and project description fields is automatically deleted during the application submission process at Grants.gov.

4. Neither I nor my collaborators are able to work on our project during the academic year. Can we work on our project only during the summers?

No. The Collaborative Research program supports sustained full-time or part-time activities over the course of the entire period of performance.

5. Must we have a contract with a publisher before applying in the Manuscript Preparation funding category?

No. Although having a contract is helpful, proposals without it can be successful, so long as there is an appropriate and feasible plan leading towards manuscript submission to a publisher at the end of the period of performance.

6. We have some supporting materials that are not in electronic format. How can we submit them?

You must convert them into one or more PDF files. See the Attachments Form instructions in the NOFO for guidance on how to format your PDFs.

7. We expect to receive some supporting materials after the deadline. Can they be added to our application?

No. You cannot add materials to an application after the deadline.

8. We are a team of collaborators from several different disciplines. Should we pick “interdisciplinary” as the field for our project on the Supplementary Cover Sheet for NEH Grant Programs?

No. You should pick a primary and secondary discipline before you pick “interdisciplinary” as your tertiary, since “interdisciplinary” is not a well-defined academic field.

9. We would like to maximize our chance of receiving an award, so we plan to submit a second application for the same project to another NEH program. Is that allowed?

Possibly, but keep in mind that, per [2 CFR §200.403\(f\)](#), NEH does not permit overlapping costs on two or more awards for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets. NEH may disallow overlapping project costs, and an individual’s level of effort cannot exceed 100% across multiple active federally funded awards.

E. Budget Advice

1. If we still have questions about allowable costs or administrative requirements after we have read the NOFO and FAQs, whom should we contact?

You should contact your institution's research development, sponsored research, or grant administration office, which will likely be familiar with federal budget requirements. If the staff there have questions about allowable costs or administrative requirements, they should contact NEH's Office of Grant Management at grantmanagement@neh.gov.

2. We can't explain some of the items on our budget form in the space available. Where can we provide additional information for these items?

You must attach a budget justification (section L of the Research and Related Budget form) to describe how the amounts requested from NEH for each line item of the budget will support the achievement of the proposed objectives.

3. Who should we name as a key person in section A on the Research and Related Budget form?

You should include project team members employed by the applicant institution who are playing a leadership role on the project in **A. Key Persons**. You should include additional project team members employed by the applicant institution in **B. Other Personnel**. You may include costs for other project team members who are not employed by the applicant institution in **F3. Consultant Services** or **F5. Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs**, depending on their role on the project and how you are compensating them. You should list individuals affiliated with institutions outside the U.S. who are receiving compensation in **F3. Consultant Services**. Not everyone included in **Attachment 1: Project Team** needs to be included on the budget, and the status an individual is granted for the purposes of the budget will have no impact on their role in the project and its implementation.

4. May we choose to hold our meetings outside of the United States?

Yes, but there must be a project-related and justifiable reason for meeting outside of the United States. Saving money on lodging is not a sufficient justification. Any foreign travel must be undertaken on U.S. flag carriers (coach or equivalent), wherever such service is available. Refer to the "Travel Costs" and "Foreign Travel" sections of the [General Terms and Conditions for Awards to Organizations](#) for further details.

5. We need a scanner to digitize archival materials. Can our budget include the purchase of a scanner?

No. As a matter of programmatic policy, you cannot use Collaborative Research awards to purchase computers or peripherals, including scanners and printers. See **D6. Funding Restrictions**.

6. Can we request funds for an adjunct to fulfill the teaching duties of a scholar who will be working on our project instead of teaching?

No. You may not request funding for an adjunct not working on the project, but you may request funds to compensate the time and effort of the scholar working on the project. All grant funds must directly support work on the proposed project.

7. We would like to hold a symposium or conference to disseminate the results of our book manuscript. May we request funding for travel costs or a rental venue for this purpose?

No. The Manuscript Preparation category does not support convenings. Travel costs for core team members to visit archives or research sites, or to meet in person to complete essential writing or editing of the manuscript, can be supported but must be justified in the application.

8. May we include travel costs to attend an academic conference for the purpose of disseminating the project?

No. You may not include travel costs associated with attending a regularly occurring professional or scholarly conference even if the aim of attending is, in whole or part, dissemination of the proposed project. Dissemination of results at such professional meetings is encouraged, and you should mention in the application narrative any plans to do so, but do not request funding for such travel in the budget. See **D6. Funding Restrictions**.

F. Application Review

1. What can we do to increase our chances for success?

Familiarize yourselves with all the materials on the [program resource page](#). There you will find sample proposals and a list of recently funded projects. Follow all the instructions in the NOFO. If your application is unsuccessful, request the reviewers' comments and incorporate their advice in a revised application. For reasons of confidentiality, requests for reviewers' comments must be made by email to collaborative@neh.gov by either the project director or the institutional grant administrator. If you still have questions, email NEH staff at collaborative@neh.gov.

2. We applied last year and were unsuccessful. Will this be held against us if we apply again this year?

No. NEH regards all applications as new. Previous unsuccessful applications are considered confidential and will not be disclosed to the reviewers, who will not be the same reviewers who evaluated your previous application. We recommend that you not mention in your narrative previously unsuccessful applications.

3. Are there common pitfalls that we should avoid?

Avoid jargon and highly specialized vocabulary. If you must use some of the latter, do so sparingly and define your terms.

Do not assume that gap-filling is sufficient for high significance. Engage with the literature in your field or fields and explain how your project advances understanding beyond what scholars already know, adds significantly to existing knowledge, or transforms how scholars approach a topic—and explain why your new contribution matters.

Do not assume that all the panelists reviewing your application will be experts in your specific area. Write for humanities scholars outside of your specific area, not just experts in your field.

Avoid the minor errors that result in applications being ruled ineligible (e.g., exceeding mandatory page limits, proposing degree candidates as directors or co-directors).