

Introduction

0:02

Welcome to an informational webinar about the Landmarks of American History and Culture and Summer Institutes program, led by Julia Nguyen, a senior program officer in the Division of Lifelong Learning. Over the course of the webinar, we will explain key features of the program, discuss project development, provide an overview of the application process, explain the review process and provide application tips.

About the Program

0:31

The Landmarks of American History and Culture and Summer Institutes program supports humanities education through professional development for K-12 teachers or higher education faculty. Landmarks and Institutes are residential professional development programs that convene educators from across the nation to deepen their understanding of significant topics in the humanities and enrich their capacity for effective scholarship and teaching. Institutes can engage with any topic in the humanities, while Landmarks workshops must investigate a topic in American history or culture through historic sites.

1:07

What can you do with a Landmarks or Institutes grant? These images are taken from previous projects and show a little of the range of topics possible. Previous directors, for example, have immersed educators in study of 20th century architecture, the Civil Rights movement, the history and cultures of the Mississippi Delta, the history and literary output of California's immigrant cultures, early modern European manuscripts, and African history.

1:38

What are the outlines of the program? Funding is tied to the length of the professional development project. For a one-week project, the maximum award amount is \$150,000. For two weeks, it is \$205,000. And for three weeks, it is \$230,000. Projects must be offered for an audience of either K-12 teachers or higher education faculty members. So, you can't mix the two groups in the same project. And you would apply to offer your project in either summer 2027 or summer 2028. Eligible organizations include 501(c)3 nonprofits, accredited U.S. public or private institutions of higher education, state or local government, or federally recognized Tribal government.

2:33

What are some important dates? The deadline for applications is June 25th, 2026. This is a firm deadline and except for the very rare cases covered by NEH's late submission policy, NEH will not consider applications submitted after the deadline. We anticipate that award notification will take place in December 2026. Projects that are running in summer 2027 will have a period of performance starting on March 1st, 2027. And projects running in summer 2028 will have a period of performance starting on October 1st, 2027.

Project Development

3:15

What kinds of activities are supported? This program supports professional development programs that vary in length from one to three weeks. We do not privilege longer or shorter projects but do be sure that your topic is well calibrated to the number of weeks that you choose. All projects must be in-person; there is no virtual option this year. You can choose any number of participants between 25 and 36, but you must target a national audience. All projects must also create a website that will be used for recruitment, for communication with participants, and for dissemination of project outcomes. All of these activities are common to both Landmarks and Institutes. However, keep in mind that Landmarks projects must also engage participants in place-based learning of American history and culture at historic sites.

4:13

Taken another way, what are the outputs and outcomes of a Landmarks of American History and Culture and Summer Institutes grant? The output is simple: one to three weeks of sustained engagement with a humanities topic for 25 to 36 participants. The outcomes are deepened participant understanding of significant topics in the humanities and enhanced capacity for effective humanities scholarship and teaching.

4:42

As you are planning your activities, think also about the people you will want to include on your project team. Every project must have one or more project directors. The director or co-directors are responsible for all of the project's programmatic activities, basically making sure that you do what you said you would do in your application. Each project should also designate a replacement director in case the project director is unable to finish the project for whatever reason. Projects for K-12 teachers should have a K-12 specialist on board who will participate in planning the project and then lead sessions helping participants reflect on what they have learned and providing strategies for teaching new content. The K-12 specialist might be an experienced classroom teacher, an education faculty member, a curriculum developer, a museum educator, or an educator with experience facilitating professional development. Successful projects generally also have a range of visiting faculty members who can offer multiple perspectives on the project. So, who are the people who have the subject matter expertise that your project needs? These are often professors, but might also include museum staff, archivists, and others. Finally, running a successful Landmarks workshop or Institute is a lot of work. These projects are intense and logistically complicated. A good project coordinator is crucial.

6:15

Earlier I listed some of the activities the program is designed to support, but there are other things that we cannot support. The Notice of Funding Opportunity, or guidelines, has a full list of funding restrictions, but I thought I'd highlight a few that are specific to this program. First, grant funds cannot be used for the rental of recreational facilities, or for any costs related to social events such as banquets or dinners, receptions, and entertainment. NEH funds cannot be used for activities performed by other federal entities or personnel. This is especially crucial to understand for projects that might want to take participants to a historic site owned or administered by the National Park Service or another federal agency like the National Archives or the Library of Congress. It's fine to visit these sites, but you cannot use NEH funds to pay admission fees, rent facilities, or pay staff. Next, grant funds cannot be used for tuition fees for participants or for tuition remission. We also cannot support projects centered on pedagogical theory and strategies or research on educational methods, tests, or measurements. We have gotten some questions about this. So, to clarify, how can you execute a project to improve the teaching of the humanities without ever discussing the teaching part?

Of course, we expect that projects will include sessions where participants will discuss pedagogy, discuss how they're going to bring content into their classroom. However, the primary focus should remain on the humanities content.

Applying

8:00

So, you've planned your project and you're ready to apply. What are the steps that you need to take? The first thing is to consult the Notice of Funding Opportunity (or the guidelines). This will walk you through how to put your application together. We will also refer to this document as the NOFO. On the Landmarks and Institutes program page on the NEH website, you will find resources including the application instructions tab. If you click on that tab and then expand step one, you'll find the Notice of Funding Opportunity or the NOFO. Read it carefully. It will tell you what information we want you to include in your application, as well as the questions that reviewers will be asking of your application.

8:48

Your application is essentially a series of attachments, and in the NOFO on page 8 you will find a table that lists the materials. The most important is the narrative. This is where you make the intellectual, educational, and practical case for your project, and it is generally the application element that reviewers spend the most time on. The narrative is limited to 10 single space pages, and this is a hard limit.

Other attachments include the work plan, resumes reading list, academic schedule for your landmarks workshop or institute, letters of commitment from project participants and letters of support, participant evaluations (if you have offered a project in the past), subrecipient budgets, your indirect cost rate agreement, and an explanation of delinquent federal debt.

Some of these attachments, such as the participant evaluations, subrecipient budgets, and explanation of delinquent federal debt, may not be applicable to every application.

The table on page 8 will spell out which attachments are required of all applicants, which are conditionally required of applicants under certain conditions—for example, the explanation of delinquent federal debt. If your organization is delinquent in the payment of any federal debt, you need to explain why and attach evidence of a payment plan with the IRS. However, if your organization is not delinquent in the payment of federal debt, you don't need to worry about this.

Finally, there are some elements that are conditionally required for awardees that can be submitted at the time of application. These include, for example, the Certification Regarding Lobbying.

So what attachments are required for this program?

The required attachments are the narrative, a comprehensive description of your proposed landmarks workshop or institute with its ten-page limit. And remember, this is a hard limit. The narrative has several sections, and the NOFO explains what information you should include in each section.

Also required is a detailed work plan that describes the activities that will take place during the period of performance to plan and execute your project. Use a timeline that includes each activity and identifies responsible staff. Explain how outcomes from one activity will carry over into the next. You should include resumes for key personnel in your project. If they have a role described in the narrative and work plan, their resume should be included in this attachment. We suggest a length of two pages per person for resumes.

You should also include letters of commitment and support from individuals and institutions involved in the project.

A reading list is also required. This would include books, articles, primary sources, films, videos and other materials that participants would work with before and during the workshop. Be sure to

indicate whether participants must complete any readings before the start of the Institute or workshop.

Finally, provide a detailed schedule for the sessions that includes information like a daily sequence of activities, including when and how each day will begin and end, and meals and breaks; the resources, readings and other materials that participants are likely to use each day; the presenters and their topics; questions to frame sessions and organize discussion activities; sessions for reflection; and sessions for participants to develop materials or plan activities for their own teaching and scholarship.

12:28

The application is actually submitted through Grants.gov. When you reach the grant page at Grants.gov, you will see a red apply button that will let you start a workspace for your application. The Grants.gov listing for the project also includes important information about eligibility and where to get information on the NEH web page. So, there will be a link to the grant resource page on the NEH site, as well as the Lifelong Learning e-mail address.

13:00

When you or your institutional grant administrator start your application workspace in Grants.gov, there are several required forms. These are the SF-424 application for federal assistance, the supplementary cover sheet for NEH grant programs, the project performance site location form, the research and related budget form, and the budget justification, as well as the attachment form where you will upload all of your application elements that we just discussed. One thing to keep in mind: your narrative, work plan, and all of your other application elements must be uploaded as PDFs. And one note about these forms: get in touch with your sponsored research office early in the process. They can help you with the forms and, depending on the institution and personnel involved, may even prefer or require to open the workspace and fill out the forms themselves (with your input). And remember, it's actually the institutional grant administrator, the IGA, who is usually someone in your sponsored research office, who actually submits the application. I cannot stress enough that you should get in touch with them early in the process so that you and they are all on the same page. Some institutions, for example, have internal deadlines, which may be a week or more before the NEH deadline so that the sponsored Research Office can prepare or review your budget, review the application for completeness, and conduct other checks. So, the most important thing to know is that you really need to get in touch with your sponsored research office very early in the process.

Review

14:47

Once you've submitted your application, what happens? The NEH review process is a multi-stage process designed to ensure that each application receives a full and fair review. Once applications are received, they are sorted into panels by a topic, activity, type, or institution type as appropriate. The goal is to make sure that like proposals are reviewed together as much as possible. Then panels of peer reviewers are convened to assess the quality of the proposals against the stated review criteria. After all of the panels have met, division staff use panelist ratings and comments to make funding recommendations based on the availability of funds. These recommendations are presented to the National Council on the Humanities, which reviews them. The NEH chairman considers the recommendations of the Council and the staff, and by law makes all funding decisions. Once funding decisions are final, awards are announced. As I mentioned earlier, we anticipate that awards for this program will be announced in December 2026.

15:59

NEH uses a peer review process, so the panelists will be scholars, educators, and administrators like you. We try as much as possible to match the experience and expertise of the panelists to the topics and activities of the applications under review. So, for example, if we had a large number of proposals to direct projects on topics in European art history, we would be sure to recruit art historians to serve on the panel. The panels that review projects for K-12 educators will also include K-12 teachers as part of the panelist group.

16:35

Your proposal will be reviewed against the review criteria stated in the NOFO. For the Landmarks of American History and Culture and Summer Institutes program, there are three criteria. First, intellectual quality and significance, which includes the intellectual significance of the topic and approach and the expertise of the project team. Second, program design and feasibility, which includes the quality of the schedule, personnel, and collaborating institutions. And third, impact, which includes the project's potential to strengthen participants' capacity to teach the proposed topic and post-project engagement. Returning projects will also be evaluated on how they have incorporated feedback from previous projects to make improvements.

17:24

This might lead you to ask: how can I volunteer to serve on a panel? There is a sign-up form on the NEH website where you can enter your information. It goes into a database that NEH staff can search when looking for panelists. Serving as a panelist is a lot of work, but our panelists have told us that it is often fulfilling work. Currently all panels take place online and there is a modest stipend for service.

Application Tips

17:51

Finally, here are a few application tips. First read the NOFO. Read it more than once. You really can't go wrong by reading the NOFO multiple times. It really does walk you through everything that you need to know in order to put together a strong application. Second, contact your sponsored research office early in the process and work closely with them. I cannot stress this enough. Next, make sure you include all required materials in your proposal and address the review criteria in your application. Fourth, make the strongest possible case for your project. Reviewers are not mind readers, so don't assume that they will read between the lines, or fill in the gaps, or just magically understand the importance of your topic. Make it clear to them. Next, know your audience and your funder. High quality humanities content is at the core of what we fund. On the program resource page, we provide some sample proposals. These are selected portions of funded proposals that can give you an idea of how successful applicants have put their applications together. Read them. But also remember that every project and every proposal is different. Next, draft early and get feedback. Currently, staff in the Division of Lifelong Learning are not able to read draft applications, but many of your colleagues may be willing to do so. And finally, contact the Division of Lifelong Learning if you have questions. You can e-mail your questions to learning@neh.gov. This concludes our webinar. Thank you so much for viewing. We look forward to receiving your questions and ultimately receiving your applications. Thank you.