NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES
DIVISION OF **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

Media Projects

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Updated: March 24, 2026

General information

1. What advice do you have for applicants in putting forth a strong proposal?
The project itself must fall within the fields of the humanities and accord with the purpose and goals of NEH.

Review sample narratives from successful applications on the program resource page; they will give you models that can help you prepare your application.

In judging your project's fit for NEH, review the list of recent awards: Media Projects: Development Grants and Media Projects: Production Grants.

Once you have determined that your project is a good fit for Media Projects, convince us that your project will develop into a great film or audio program. NEH wants to fund engaging, creative projects that people will enjoy.

2. What are the most common mistakes that applicants make?
Applicants often fail to provide as much information as reviewers expect. You must discuss the project in considerable detail, clearly articulating your concept for the project and the humanities themes that it reflects, even when the proposal is for funding at the Development level.

Media producers should have completed 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 experience that strengthens your current request.

3. 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.

4. If I am an individual producer unaffiliated with a nonprofit organization, may I submit a Media Projects application?
No. As described in Section C1 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations recognized as tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; accredited institutions of higher education (public or nonprofit); state and local governments and their agencies; and federally recognized Native American tribal governments. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

Independent producers frequently apply in partnership with eligible organizations. The eligible organization (lead applicant) is responsible for submitting the application to NEH. **The lead applicant must not function solely as a fiscal agent or fiscal sponsor but must make substantive contributions to the success of the project.**

If NEH selects your application for an award, the lead applicant will assume all programmatic, financial, and legal responsibilities of the award. For further information about recipient responsibilities for managing and monitoring subrecipients, see 2 CFR §200.331.

5. Does the Media Program fund film and audio programs on international (non-United States) subjects?
Yes, the program funds media projects on both international and American subjects.

6. Does the Media Program fund individual films or series that are shorter than thirty minutes?
No. Stand-alone films must be at least a broadcast hour (forty minutes). Episodes that will form a series may be any length.

7. In the Media Projects program, what distinguishes a Production application from a Development application?
NEH expects that Production applications will reflect more preparatory research, and describe the project in greater detail, than Development applications.

See A1 of the NOFO for a description of Development and Production and D2 for specific application requirements at each funding level.

8. Can a film or television Production script or treatment be shorter than the length recommended in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)?
Yes. The length of a successful script or treatment can vary, depending on the scope of the project and your writing style. NEH expects the script or treatment to provide a detailed description of what viewers will see when they watch the completed film. We understand that projects evolve during production, and the completed film may not be identical to the script or treatment you submitted at the time of application.

9. Does the Media Projects program fund resources for students and teachers?
You should gear your projects towards public audiences, and the budget and activities should reflect this focus. However, a Production project can include resources that help students and teachers explore the central humanities content and themes.

10. Our project is for a film that will be distributed only online. Do you support film, television, radio, and podcast projects that will be distributed only online?
Yes, but 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.

Projects with primary outputs that are digital (website, game, mobile app, or other digital product) are not eligible in this grant program.

Submitting an application

1. Must we submit our application through Grants.gov?
Yes, you must submit your application through Grants.gov Workspace. See D1 of the NOFO for information on accessing the application packages and D3 for information on necessary registrations.

2. May we submit multiple proposals with the same project director at the same time?
Yes. In each application, clearly explain how you would allocate your time if you were awarded more than one grant. You may not include the same project costs in two or more applications for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets under this program. However, you may seek funding from other NEH programs for **complementary** aspects of the same overall project.

3. May the project director also serve as the institutional grant administrator?
No. The project director may not serve as the institutional grant administrator. The role of the project director, who is responsible for the programmatic activities, must be distinct from that of the institutional grant administrator, who functions as the representative of the recipient organization with authority to act on the organization's behalf in matters related to the administration of the award.

4. When we apply through Grants.gov, how should we submit our sample?
Host your sample online and provide the URL. You are responsible for ensuring that the link to the sample remains active and that the sample is accessible throughout the review period. See D2 of the NOFO regarding the submission of samples.

Budget

1. What if I am not sure how to include a particular item on the Research and Related Budget?
Carefully review the instructions for Completing the Research and Related Budget Form found in Step 4 of the General Application Guide for Awards to Organizations. Use the budget justification to describe all your proposed activities and costs. If you have questions about categorizing costs or which costs are allowable, contact the Office of Grant Management at grantmanagement@neh.gov.

2. How should we record especially large or complex costs on the Research and Related Budget form?
Summarize the expense on the Research and Related Budget and include a detailed explanation in your budget justification. If your project includes subrecipients, you must also submit a Research and Related budget and budget justification detailing costs for each subrecipient.

3. What if the total costs for our project exceed the amount of our projected NEH award?
If you are applying for **Development** and are including voluntary cost share (your total project costs exceed the amount of your requested NEH award), you must include a line-by-line budget for the complete project in the budget justification, including the categories listed above.

If you are applying for **Production**, a line-by-line budget is required, whether or not you are including voluntary cost share.

4. How do we distinguish between subrecipients, contractors, and consultants in our budget?
Per 2 CFR §200.331(a), a subrecipient carries out **programmatic** activities to meet the goals and objectives of the funded project. Often, when an applicant partners with a production company to produce a film or digital media project, the production company is considered a subrecipient.

Per 2 CFR §200.331(b), a contractor provides goods and services within its normal business operations for the benefit of the recipient. Examples of contractor services include transportation services, catering or food services, transcription services, and data hosting or data storage.

If you are working with independent individuals who are providing expertise to the project, and they are neither your employees nor the employees of a subrecipient, then those individuals are consultants.

See General Guidance on Managing Subawards.

5. How should we determine if personnel on our project should be categorized as "Key Personnel," "Other Personnel," "Consultant Services," or "Subrecipients" on the Research and Related (R&R) Budget?
"Key Personnel" (R&R section A) and "Other Personnel" (R&R section B) are your organization's employees.

Your project may also include key persons such as directors, producers, and others who are part of the media team but are not employed by the applicant organization. These and other personnel on Media Projects proposals may be classified as consultants and listed under "Consultant Services" (R&R section F3). See 2 CFR §200.459.

You may fund other personnel through subawards (R&R section F5), such as subawards you make to a production house or a digital design firm. See 2 CFR §200.331(a). You must submit a separate Research and Related Budget for each subrecipient.

Review the instructions for preparing the Research and Related Budget in the NOFO and contact the Office of Grant Management at grantmangement@neh.gov if you have a question regarding the allowability or classification of costs.

6. Where should we include humanities scholars on the Research and Related Budget?
Humanities scholars are typically included under "Consultant Services" (R&R section F3).

7. Where should we list camera packages, audio packages, studio or editing suite rentals.
If you will incur these costs, list them on your budget as "Equipment or Facility Rental/User Fees" (R&R section F6) and detail them in the budget justification.

If a subrecipient will incur these costs, include them on the subrecipient budget on line F6 "Equipment or Facility Rental/User Fees" and detail them in the budget justification.

If you will rent multiple pieces of equipment, such as camera packages and an editing suite, list the total funds requested on the Research and Related budget and include a detailed breakdown in the budget justification. If these expenses include the cost of personnel (such as camera operators, sound operator, or editors), indicate this in your budget justification.

8. We will operate a production office for six months. Where do we list these expenses (office rental, utilities, etc.) on the budget form? Also, must we list each office expense as a separate line item?
List these costs under "Equipment or Facility Rental/User Fees" (R&R section F6). Itemize these expenses in your budget justification.

9.   We would like to claim the federal de minimis rate of 10% MTDC. How do we calculate this?
Per 2 [CFR 200.414(f)](#), if you do not have a current federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, then you may claim up to 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) as indirect costs. When calculating the federal de minimis, you must use MTDC as your base calculation, which requires you to remove certain items – notably subaward costs in excess of $25,000 – when calculating indirect costs.

>*Applicant with direct costs & production subaward*
>Total direct costs: $100,000
>Total direct costs include a subaward for: $50,000
>MTDC: $75,000 ($100,000-$25,000)
>Indirect cost amount calculation: $75,000*.10 = $7,500
>Total project costs: $100,000+$7,500 = $107,500

>*Applicant with direct costs only, no subawards*
>Total direct costs: $100,000
>MTDC: $100,000
>Indirect cost amount calculation: $100,000*.10 = $10,000
>Total project costs: $100,000+$10,000 = $110,000

Funding and Distribution

1. If we receive NEH funding, may we also accept funding from other sources?
Yes. We encourage you to approach a range of funders, as production costs may exceed the NEH award ceiling.

2. What expectations does NEH have for the distribution of a project?
As a taxpayer-funded agency, NEH expects that funded projects will be offered for broad distribution to the widest possible audience. Although NEH does not require you to have a commitment for distribution when you apply, a letter of interest from a broadcaster or other distribution partner may enhance your application.

Humanities content and advisers

1. What are "humanities themes"?
A theme is a brief interpretive assertion about a topic that shows the educational direction that a project will take. It identifies a topic and suggests what audiences might learn about it. A theme incorporates 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.

2. The NOFO says that a typical application identifies three or four themes, what if I have more themes?
You are welcome to identify as many themes as you wish; however, a longer list of themes in an application does not necessarily increase your chances of funding, because it may be an indication that the project is not focused. Identify and develop the most relevant theme(s).

3. Who 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.

4. May our advisory team include experts who do not have advanced degrees in the humanities?

Yes, if the team also includes humanities scholars.

5. When should we start consulting with scholars about a project?

The earlier, the better. The projects that NEH staff recommend for funding are usually ones in which scholars have helped shape the project's conceptual framework.

6. 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 several scholars enables the exploration of a diverse range of scholarly perspectives.

7. How much should we pay scholarly advisers?

There is no set fee for advisers. Some projects pay advisers 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. See 2 CFR §200.459. When engaging faculty members employed by your institution as scholarly advisers, work with your institutional grant administrator to ensure compliance with 2 CFR §200.430.

8. Do I need to include letters of commitment and short biographies from scholars, not part of my advisory team, who I plan to interview?

No.