Fellowships Webinar Transcript

Alright, again, welcome. The guidelines are just posted on the NEH website and I am going to give you a little overview over the program and the application process. A quick introduction on my part; I'm Claudia Kinkela, I'm a program officer in the NEH Division of Research, I've been with this program for 10 years. I am a political theorist by training, and I've been here for over 11 years now, and taught at Georgetown University before that.

Next to me is Jacob Lusk, who is our program analyst in the division. His background is in American Studies, and he'll be here to help us with questions and to answer questions, and go through the program.

I'll be speaking about 30 minutes, and then spend the rest of our time on questions and answers. Please send questions through the go-to webinar interface at any time. We will wait until the end to answer them, and we'll also have a recording of the webinar that you can watch any time after today. It will probably take me two days for the link to be up on our website.

So, the 30 minutes I want to spend on, I'll give you an overview here, next slide, of the program goals, the eligibility criteria, details on the content of the application, and where to find more information. As I talk, again, you can type in questions at any time.

Next slide. I'll start with the goals of the program. The Fellowships program's major role is to support outstanding and advanced research in the humanities. That includes all disciplines, and all fields, and it also includes applications from fields outside the humanities, if they include humanities methods or other humanities aspects.

Your application will be stronger, that's to the second point here, if you can clearly articulate your contribution to both your own discipline and to the humanities in a broader sense.

Think about what questions and discussions your project will be able to contribute to and try to articulate them as clearly as possible. I'll talk a little bit more about the actual narrative later. Also know that your project can be at any stage of development. That means you could be in an earlier stage, when you're just starting a project, or you're in the middle [research phase], or you're trying to finalize it. All of these are eligible.

Next slide. So, who should apply? The Fellowships program is open to all disciplines, as I said, in the humanities, and also to projects from the social sciences and the sciences that apply humanities methods. For example, if you had a history of medicine, you would be in the right place, or a history of any of the social sciences disciplines, this will come to us as well. We invite all disciplines, individuals from all institutions, and especially welcome independent scholars and junior scholars in this program.

So, who's eligible to apply? Here's just a formal list. The program is open to US citizens and to foreign nationals who have been living in the US for three years preceding the deadline. So, you would have to have been in the country for the three years prior to this deadline.

No advanced degree is required. You also don't have to have an institutional affiliation, but you may not be currently enrolled in a degree program.

For some of the PhD students, you could be eligible, or you are eligible if you have satisfied all the requirements for the degree by April 8th and you're just waiting for the conferral of the degree. So, in that case, we ask that you provide a letter from the dean or the conferring school attesting to this very status, at this point in time.

Also, to the question of eligibility, sometimes we do get the question of, well, what do you understand [by 'humanities'], or how are the humanities defined? Here is a list of all of the disciplines that fall into the humanities.

It is not complete, but it includes most of the important humanities disciplines. You see here history, literature, language, the theory and history of the arts and the performing arts.

We don't support projects in the arts, in the performing arts themselves, but we support the history and the theory [of them], and that's also one of the distinctions that is often asked about.

Philosophy is part of the humanities, religion, political theory, jurisprudence, anthropology, archaeology, and there are some others that are not on the list. Again, the Fellowships program also supports projects in the sciences and social sciences that employ humanistic research methods.

And what are the typical outcomes and products of a fellowship? The most common outcome of the fellowship is still the book or a monograph, but we're also seeing other types of products including eBooks, digital materials, peer-reviewed articles; and also, translations and editions with a critical apparatus are eligible in the program.

And here's just some recent examples, so you have an idea of what kind of books we have supported in the last few years. That's *Flamenco Nation*, *The Construction of Spanish National Identity,* by Sandie Holguín, University of Wisconsin Press, 2019. *Imagined Homelands*, Jason Rudy, *British Poetry in the Colonies*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017, and on the right is *Emperor and a New Life of Charles V,* by Geoffrey Parker at the Yale University Press, 2019.

All right, [here are] the key program details. You probably know [about] the duration [of the fellowship] - it has to be between six and twelve months. The fellowship can be taken at a minimum of six months, the maximum is twelve months. You could pick any number of months in between, so it can be seven months, eight months, nine months, and so on, but the award must be taken full-time and continuously, and no administrative duties are allowed. The stipend is $5,000 per month, and the maximum award for twelve months would be $60,000. The application deadline, very important, is April 8th.

You will be notified in late December of this year and you can start your project as early as January 1 of next year, and this is probably interesting too, you can start as late as September 1st, 2022, and that's not a typo. You have about a 20-month window between January 1st and the latest possible start time for the fellowship.

And our funding ratio, you see, we make an average of 79 awards per year at the funding ratio of 7%, and our application numbers range between 1000 and 1200, and I hope the numbers do not discourage you. I would like to encourage you to apply, if you don't apply, you don't have a chance to get a grant.

But it also means that if you don't get it the first time around, because we do have a limited budget, I would encourage you to reapply, and then, maybe, reapply again. Before we continue to the

content of the application and what your narrative should include, let's take a look at the list of items and activities we do not fund.

And again, this is not a complete list, but some of the highlights you can see on the slide. The complete list is on page 14 in the guidelines, and some of the things that come back a lot or I have been asked about is creative nonfiction writing.

It's one of the questions we get a lot, whether we do fund that, and it is a not allowed item here: creation of performance art, creative writing in any form, promotion of a particular political, religious, ideological point of view, advocacy work, policy papers, educational material, empirical social science project without humanities content, textbooks, curricula, and dissertation revision, per se, without any new additions.

So, this is the list that you can read, also in the guidelines, and I think now we can move on to the application materials, of what you actually need to apply.

So, I go over the various items you will need and show you a list of the complete application materials a little bit later. It will consist of a set of seven-to-ten components that you will submit through Grants.gov, and we'll talk about that also, and this information you can find in the guidelines under D2, it's called "content and form of application submission."

I'm now going over the materials from page 5 to 13, and I would recommend that you print out the guidelines for you for referral, as well. Alright, so now about the content of your application: First, you'll need a 3-page narrative, single-spaced. This is the heart of your application and I'll talk more about the narrative itself in the next slide, I'm going over the items here right now.

The one-page bibliography should demonstrate your knowledge of the field and can be used as a tool to show variety in the literature. And the reader will know that it is not comprehensive regarding the field you're working in.

The same goes for the two-page resume. I propose you focus on the items that are most relevant to your current project and best demonstrate your competencies there, and also always add any language skills you might have. The five-page writing sample is meant to demonstrate your writing style or the writing style of the current project, and it will also be used to assess the clarity of your writing.

It can be from the proposed project, and that's the preferred writing sample, or it can also be from a recent publication, but it should not be more than five years old. It must be from a single piece of work and single-authored. For junior scholars, an excerpt from the dissertation is also acceptable.

Also for the writing sample, please look at the guidelines for the format restrictions for that as well. And appendices [are relevant] for some types of projects; you will need a one-page appendix, this includes editions, translations, database projects, and visual material. All other projects do not need an appendix.

Doctoral students who are just waiting for the conferral of the degree are eligible if they can provide the letter that I mentioned earlier, and that will also be provided in an appendix before April 8th, the deadline.

So, the 1,000-character summary of the proposal is important, as it will be on the cover sheet of your application, and it's something that the reviewer sees first and that will be reviewed first, and it will also be used to determine what panel your application will be reviewed in, along with the pick of your choice in the pull-down menu for "project field" in one of the Grants.gov forms.

Finally, you can submit two letters of reference. Ideally, they should come from two different institutions other than your own, if possible, and from people who know your project well. Missing

letters do not make your project ineligible, but it's more helpful to include them, and the letters are due by May 1st, so not at the same time as the application.

Recommenders will be getting a prompt from us about 10 days after the deadline, around April 17th, and will then have two weeks to send the letters in. During this time period, you will be able to check on the status of the letters and you can send your recommender a reminder.

And finally, here is a note that fellowships function like salary replacements, so there is no requirement of a budget in this program. All right, now we're jumping back to the three-page narrative, which is the heart of your application, and what it should look like.

Now I'm on page 10 of the guidelines, or the notice of funding opportunity, you will find the description of the parts that should be included in the narrative, and those are the five that are on here.

One is the research, sorry, the significance and contribution of your research. Second, the organizational structure of your project, what concepts and methods you will employ, a work plan, which should include where exactly you are in your project at the time of the fellowship, competencies, skills and access - explain your background in the field, language skills, research, material sources, and archives, and other materials. And five is the final product and dissemination. Describe the intended results of the project, who your audience is, and where you might want to publish it.

You don't have to have a contract in order to apply. You may mention it, but it probably will not affect the process itself.

This is, in condensed form, what you need to include in the three-page narrative. And because it's so dense, I recommend that you look at the review criteria, that, well, we look at them [in a moment]. Also, there are [application] samples online that you can use to see how all of this information will fit within the three-page requirement.

I urge you not to try to use smaller font to put more information on the page. Applications that are, that exceed the page limit or violate the format, will be rejected from further consideration.

So now let's look at the review criteria and I'll talk now a little bit more at length about what you want to focus on or pay attention to. Before you even start the application, your first step should be to take a look at the review criteria, which we give the reviewer to evaluate your proposal.

So that [the peer-reviewers] will be your audience, the first audience, and I highly recommend that you use those criteria to structure and present your project in the narrative and around the application. For this purpose, please consider the writing of a grant application its own genre, and it's different from an article or a book proposal, and I think it needs a bit of strategy, and those criteria will help you craft the narrative in a strategic way.

And those five criteria, you'll find under the heading E1, or page 15 and 16 of the funding notice. So, let's talk about them one by one. The first criterion is the intellectual significance of your project, and it says, including its value to humanities scholars, general audiences, or both.

So here you want to tell your reader what your project is about and why it is important. You want to explain what it will contribute to a specific field in a way that a humanities generalist can understand, and please situate your project in the broader context of humanities research and knowledge.

The main objective here you want to ask yourself is, how will my project change the scholarship? How will we think differently? Step back. Does it tell us anything larger? Press yourself to think about the broader significance for the humanities.

One way to stress your contribution is to describe how your work fits in with other work in your field that has addressed the same subject. A short survey of where the scholarship is at this point is helpful. Are you taking research in a new direction? Are you using previously untapped primary sources? Are you proposing an entirely new interpretation of your subject? All of these questions are meant to help you think about the larger intellectual significance.

The second criterion is the quality of the conception, definition, organization, and description of the project, and the clarity of expression. Whereas the first criterion is about the larger idea of your project, here we focus on how it is presented in your particular proposal.

Generally, peer-reviewers find that a well-written, clear application is a predictor of the quality of the planned publication, that writing a good abstract and a good narrative is important. Propose specific research questions and explain the methods, concepts, and approaches you will do to address them.

So those two first criteria are the heart of the narrative, in terms of explaining what it is about. Number three talks about the work plan. So how do you want to get this done? It is important for us to know how you will spend your time during the fellowship period, and so we ask you to situate yourself [in the project] and let us know where you will be at the time of the fellowship, and how far you think you can get [with your project]. You do not have to finish the whole project during the fellowships period, so you can say "I'm working on chapter 5, 6, or 7, or the introduction," whatever it is, "I'm doing archival research." The more detail, the better it is.

The fourth criterion is the quality or promise of quality of the applicant's work as an interpreter of the humanities. This is about your resume, again, your track record. What have you done before?

So, I think you want to emphasize your strengths in this part, if you have language skills that the project requires, again, you're going to archival collections that will add to the significant previous work you have done, all of this will be part of that criterion.

And lastly, we ask about the likelihood that you will complete the project, not necessarily during the period of performance. If you have a dissemination plan, we would like you to talk about that as well. So mention the expected publication and other outcomes of the project, if you have any, and that will be a sign for the panelists or evaluators to look at whether they have the confidence that you can produce what you said you would.

Alright, so that was, in a nutshell, the content of the narrative and the substance of the application. And on top of that, now you need a few forms. As you know, all applications have to go through the Grants.gov portal.

So, your first task would be to, well, to register, I'll talk about that in a minute. But also, to fill out these forms for us, the Application for Federal Assistance form, called SF-424. This is just a form that has your information; name, phone number, email address, mailing address, part of your ZIP code. I have to say that in this first form, the SF-424, the most important item for us is your email address.

This [email address] is where we will send notifications to. Sometimes people forget to put their email address in this form, because, unfortunately, Grants.gov has not made this field mandatory as of yet.

I hope they will, but please don't forget to put in your email address here. It also the place where you put the project title and your project description—we talked about the 1,000-character description, [it] will actually go into this form. Please make sure that you will not exceed a thousand characters. It might lead to mistakes in the application form. [The SF-424 form] it will also have the starting and end date of your project.

So, the earliest start date would be January 1st, 2021. Determine the number of months you want to apply for; so if you apply for 12 months, you put that in this form. Having said that, you can later change the exact start time. If you change your mind between now and the award information, you can change that start date. So that should not be a problem.

The second item on this list, the NEH Supplemental Information for Individuals, is the place where you will be able to designate the field of the project. This describes where your project is situated, in which area—is it in history or in literature or what subfield. You can pick three: a primary field of project and two others, and this will determine in which panel and which area you will be reviewed. So that's also important for you to consider. Other than the field of project, there'll also be a field [pull-down menu] that says "Project Director Field of Study," because sometimes it happens that your project is not in the same field of your usual area of study. So you can indicate both. There'll also be a box for "status," whether you're a junior or senior scholar, in there.

We get questions, what do you consider junior and senior? So, for our purposes, we consider junior anybody who is seven years or fewer beyond his or her terminal degree, and senior scholars is everybody seven years and above beyond a terminal degree.

This is also the place where you put in the names for your reference letter writers and email addresses, and here it's also important to note for your reference letter writers, the email: if there are no email addresses in there, we cannot send out the prompts to them, and there can only be one email address per person so that the system won't give us an error sign.

The Project/Performance Site Location Form is new, and this is just to indicate for you where your project takes place. If you don't travel it'll be your home institution, and that's fine. And then Attachments is your actual application.

So, in the grand scheme of things, the heart of your application, including the narrative, will be an attachment to the Grants.gov form. I have an overview in the next slide. This is how the structure looks like. These are all the application components that we need from you. We talked about all of them, except the last, that's the formal explanation of federal debt. If that's the case you will have to fill out a form. Otherwise, you don't need this attachment at all.

Your application needs to have attachments 1, 2, 3, & 4. Those are the four attachments we do need, and in that order, please, and with the name that we have identified, so that we can find them easily. Attachments 5 and 6 are the only conditional requirements - if you need an appendix, or if you have a degree conferral.

All right, I think that sums up the application components. Now you have to register and submit it to Grants.gov. In fact, your first step would be to register at Grants.gov. You can do that starting today, if you like. All federal applications have to go through Grants.gov.

Our application is special because the Fellowships program is one of the few programs in the government that allows for individual applications—most applications come from institutions—, and for that reason, you must make sure to create an individual applicant profile in your account. Just remember that when you sign up. If you already have a Grants.gov account, please make sure you have your password. I think they need to be updated every 90 days, so make sure that they're updated, that way, as you go closer to the deadline.

Over 50%, I would say, of our applications come in the last day before the deadline. So, I encourage you to submit much earlier than that, preferably at least a week before the deadline to avoid any technical problems. If you realize you made a mistake somewhere and want to resubmit your application before the application due date, or if you want to make corrections or updates to it, you can do that. You can submit it again and we will use your last validated online submission.

Your final version goes to review. Finally, if you have technical problems, please call the Grants.gov helpline, they do have a 24/7 hotline. The number is here and the number is also in our guidelines.

Resources. You have resources. We have the notice of funding opportunity. What I've been going over here, most of this information is in the guidelines.

There's also, on our resource website, a list of sample applications that can go through, there's a list of recently funded projects with titles and FAQs as well, and you'll have the link here on this slide, where to find all this.

And you're also welcome to ask for advice from NEH staff by email. If you want to do that, send a note to fellowships@neh.gov; this will go to Jacob or myself, and we're going to be responding to that.

All right, just a quick note of what's new in 2020. You've heard me talk about guidelines. It's technically now wrong; we have changed the words and it's now called "Notice of Funding Opportunity." It's the same concept, but they have been restructured, and if you have seen them before, you'll find that they have a new layout and they look different.

They have tables in them, are more compact and hopefully more helpful as well. Now in our second year, we ask you to submit a writing sample, for those of you who have applied before, and that should not be more than five single-spaced pages, and excerpts are fine.

And lastly, we have a new initiative called "A More Perfect Union" that commemorates the nation's 250th anniversary and advances civic education. Take note of it, but for the purpose of your application, you may mention it, but you do not have to mention it. It will not be considered for the actual review process, it will be the same whether you mentioned it or not.

All right. I think I'm at the end of the presentation. I don't know if we have questions yet. I have a list here of FAQs that I prepared, happy to go over them. We have quite a few questions. If you want to go through the FAQs first. Let's do the FAQs, ok, I just prepared a few.

Are dissertation revisions eligible? I already mentioned that. They are and they are not, so the revisions per se are not eligible, books based on dissertations are allowed if you can tell us what you add to the material that you already have from the dissertation. Sometimes it's new chapters, or new archival work, and that's fine.

Can I apply with a collaborative project? Just a brief answer. If you're working on a collaborative project, each collaborator must submit an individual application, you can't apply both in one. If there are two, then both would have to send in [an application], or you can just send in your portion. That would be fine.

Can I apply to other NEH grant programs concurrently? Yes, you can apply to most other NEH grant programs concurrently, including the Public Scholars program, Summer Stipend program, but you can only apply to one of the following individual programs in the federal fiscal year: So, if you want to apply to the Mellon Fellowship for Digital Publication, you have to pick either or.

For the Awards for Faculty program, it's also either or, as well as for the Advanced Social Science Research for Japan program. So, those are the only ones that are excluded. Most other grant programs you can apply to concurrently, although you can only hold one award per fiscal year once you get it.

Should I apply for the NEH Fellowship or the NEH-Mellon Fellowship for Digital Publication? All projects are welcome under the Fellowships program, even though they're digital or have digital materials in them. Only for those of you who have projects that are born digital, that are ingrained digital, I recommend that you look at the Mellon Fellowships for Digital Publications.

I can talk more about it or answer questions about that if needed, but the most important thing is that all applications, whether they're digital or not, are welcome in the Fellowships program and eligible.

Lastly, does my university or college submit the application for me? That's a question we sometimes get because most applications are institutional, coming through the institution. The exception is fellowships and other individual applications. That should come from you and your home computer or your office/work computer, because most of all, the notifications will go out to the individual, and communication will be that way.

So those were the FAQs, we have other questions. Yeah, so, first I just want to acknowledge a few people have said that they could only see part of our slides, and I'm sorry for that technical error, but these slides will be posted on the website. So you'll be able to find them there as well.

So, we have a question: do we include the anticipated start date in the narrative? Do we need to know now when we anticipate starting our project or can that change? Okay, so you do not need to include the start date in your narrative, per se. It doesn't have to be, it has to be on the form, one of the two Grants.gov forms.

If you don't know the anticipated start date, just put February or whenever is closest to what you think you can do, and then, once you get the offer, we can work with you on the starting date. The important thing is to have the date on this form, the month. So, if you don't put any dates, we don't know how much money to allocate for that application. For us it's important to know how many months you apply for.

If you apply for six months then you put in a six-month period, if you want to apply for 12 then you do that, and when in doubt you put the 12-month period on there because you can always cut back but you cannot expand it. So, if there's a chance that you can take it for a year, I would just put 12 months and pick a start date that's close to where you think you can take it. I think that's it.

In terms of different stages of development, would finishing a manuscript and then revising based on reviewer comments be acceptable? So, I think the question is, if you're in the stage where you've finished the manuscript and you really only need to do editing after getting reviewer comments, is that enough work for to justify the fellowship?

That's an excellent question. So, we get applications that do specify, "I will work on my project based on the reviewer comments." The problem here is, if you give us a timeline, and you do not have the reviewer comments back at this time, the reviewer doesn't know whether you have work to do.

And we have seen this. If you apply in April—the review is in the summer—and you say, "oh I'll get the reviewers back sometime next year," we don't know if you have them back before you start, this is too vague for us to know. Unless you have them back already, or you have a date for when you will have them back. But readers will know that this is hard to track down and hard to know when you get the comments back.

So, we have seen that we do not like to fund projects that have a timeline that is not clear about when the reviewer comments are back. It will raise too many questions, and so I don't recommend putting it in there until you know when you have the reviewer comments back. If you get them back and you want to work on them, then the question becomes the work plan question.

How much work is there, do we know you have enough work to do, do you want to add a chapter, are you just working on revisions? That's a very good question and the more specific the work plan, then the better it is. I hope that makes sense.

Our next question is a question about the relationship between humanities and social sciences. The person is asking, does ethnography and other sorts of methods commonly used in social sciences count as humanities? Also an excellent question. Yes, we usually get quite a number of anthropology projects that all use ethnography as their methodology, that is acceptable,

if you can make a case that you have an interpretive part as well. Explain what will you do with the ethnography. Will you also give an interpretation of the material? Where do you see the contribution that [ethnographic] part makes to larger issues at stake? How can you make it interpretive in that sense? But yes, it is something that we do see in our applications.

We have a question about letters of recommendation. If you're a junior scholar, is it better to avoid letters from thesis or dissertation committee members if they're more familiar with your work? That's a great question, dissertation advisors. I'll go out on a limb here.

It depends on how recent your PhD is, I would say. So I heard reviewers say, if you're more than a couple of years beyond your dissertation, then you should probably find somebody else. If you're very close to the date, it's perfectly suitable for the case, but the longer it is, the more reviewers want to see spread out recommenders and a network.

Our next question is about the bibliography. This person asks, my project is interdisciplinary and each chapter works with different archival collections. How should I construct my bibliography?

That's a difficult question. I see bibliographies that just have primary sources on the top [of the page] and then secondary sources on the bottom of the page. I rarely see them by chapter in the proposal. I would just lump the primary sources together and then have the secondary sources on the bottom. And if you have more primary sources [than just filling the stop of the page], then that's fine, too.

Is it better to have...-- the question is going back to the letter writers--; would it make sense to have an archivist or someone who's working with you on the research process write a letter for you, or is it more helpful to have people who are actually in this field, in this case historians, as letter writers? Also a very good question. It's actually a great idea, I like that, but I've rarely seen archivists as recommenders in the past.

Having said that, it's not wrong to use an archivist, if that's somebody who knows the field the best, that might be in your case the best person. Otherwise, using scholars in this field is fine.

This is a question about us not being able to fund social or political advocacy. This person asks, what happens if, at the end of their book, they issue recommendations for nonpartisan, non-policy specific reform?

That's a good question. Tricky always, well tricky in the sense, we get a question, so what is social action, what is political and what is not, and my standard answer to that is always, if the subject is political it doesn't mean that the project is political.

So, it's more about the way you present the subject. We're looking for balanced presentations and informed presentations, but it could be any subject. [For example,] if you have a list for reform as a final chapter—as long as it's not going into the policy realm but is a normative reflection on reform (if that's what you thinking of)—I think that's part of what we do as academics, so I think that would be fine.

Our next question is about applying on Grants.gov. The person asks, where can we find the Grants.gov forms like the SF 424? So, these are available once you register with Grants.gov, find the application portal for this program, and begin applying.

These forms do not take a very long time to fill out. Just for the record, we recommend that you get all of your materials together and ready to go, and apply all at the same time, rather than trying to save and come back to it. We've had people have issues with that. So you can't see those now, you have to sort of register, log in and register, log in and then you'll see the forms.

Our next question is about the writing sample. Can it be from a published journal article or should it be, adding to the question here, should it be work that's being created for the actual project being proposed?

Again, good question, that also depends on where you are with the current project. If you're comfortable in submitting a writing sample from the current project, if it's ready. If it's not, then a published journal article is perfectly fine.

So, I should add, so the idea for the writing sample is to give the reviewer a sense of how you write, and I do say, we had last year, we had an example where the writing sample was for a, I think it was a non-academic writing sample, but the project was an academic project, so I don't recommend that. So, because the writing sample is just there to show how you're going to write the project. If it's a journal article in the same area, I think that's fine.

This next question is, is there a preference for 6 months or 12 months? I think what this question is really asking is, do we give, do we consider the amount of funding we're giving when we decide on whether a project is successful?

There's absolutely no difference whether you apply for 6 months or 12 months. It does not, if you apply for six months, it does not mean that you get preferred treatment, so to speak, because you're asking for less time, it's about the review process and the results. So yes, apply for as many months as you can.

Can we use our funding to buy off teaching release? We sometimes get questions about paying for substitutes for teaching and such.

So, I'm not sure I quite follow this question, because the fellowship is a salary replacement. So, whether the institution will then use money to buy off? I think the answer would be yes, but it would be up to be institution if they wanted to do that.

But the idea is that if you get the fellowship, you could not be teaching. So yes, they could do it, but it's not up to the applicant to decide.

One person just wanted to follow up on whether they could apply during their PhD dissertation year, and the answer is just, if you have completed your dissertation and are waiting for your degree to be conferred, you can apply, but you'll need to include a letter from your team or from your chair.

The way you phrase the question, I would say no, because as long as you're enrolled in the degree program and you're doing a PhD and you're writing, you're still in the program, so you can't apply. You have to be done and everything has to be already submitted. It only is relevant for those who graduate in May, let's say, and the deadline's in April, and you know, you wouldn't be able to apply, but if that's the case, if it's just this one month and you're already done, you could submit that letter from the dean or the school.

Our next question is, do we receive feedback if our application is denied? What other resources can we use to receive comments? That's a great question, you want to take that? I think that, yeah, so one of the things that we do and one of the really great reasons for applying is that, regardless of the outcome, you can request the evaluators' comments on your applications.

Please note, though, that it does take quite a while to get comments back to folks after decisions are sent, because we do need to read through every single evaluation to make sure that no privacy issues are present in the comments. So, if you applied last year, regardless, and were not successful, you can request your comments and I am working on them right now, but it does take, it may take a couple months to get them back.

Yeah, I think somebody once called NEH the largest consulting company because of this feedback we give to applicants. It's one of the advantages to apply and I can put in a plug for applying, even if you don't get funded the first time around you will get that feedback from the reviewers and panelists, and we do send them all back to you. You get a good amount of comments, between three and eight [individual] comments back.

We have a question that's really asking, the question is, if conducting research in a different language, do you recommend providing a great deal of details relating to, I think, your language skills, and provide translations into English?

So, you're eligible to apply for projects that are in a different language than English, yes. If you do that, you need to make a really strong case. Like, if you say in Spanish, why does it have to be in Spanish and who is the audience for that, and where is the audience going to be? You don't have to propose a translation into English right away.

If you want to do that, you may do that. That really depends on the subject and the contribution in general. If that's what's needed in the field, you needed a Spanish work on X, then you should be able to make a case for it and you could say then, I'm also planning an English translation after that. That's fine. But if you don't have complete plans then, I wouldn't put it in if it isn't the case.

Can my writing sample have a co-author? I think I did mention that very briefly. I would recommend not. So, single-authored would be a better way to go.

This is a question about taxes on your NEH award; if I'm funded by the NEH, is the award subjected to any form of tax? The answer is yes. We think that you will be subject to pay income tax. There are two ways of being paid the fellowship.

One way is going through the institution, and most scholars at an institution will do that, and mainly, I understand, in order to keep the benefit that they have at the institution. The institution cannot take overhead on it because it's an individual grant, and we can tell them that, and they should know that.

The other way is doing it directly to your account, into your bank account. It doesn't have to go through the institution, and in that case, you are responsible for the taxes and get a 1099 form.

Beyond that, we are actually not allowed to give any specific tax advice, so we encourage everyone to speak with an accountant or the attorney at their institution.

This is just a question about, if you're submitting a published writing sample, is there any particular part of the publication that's more advantageous to use? For example, an introduction versus an excerpt from one of your chapters of your monograph?

I think either will work. I would probably just put a sentence on top of the writing sample about the context, where it's from, and what preceded the text that you're presenting, if it's not the introduction, for example "This is from chapter 5 of my current project on X, and then just have it [after that]. I would probably pick a piece that demonstrates the way you write and argue really well.

And then similarly, this question asks, if they choose, do they need to excerpt, you know, a writing sample to fit the page limit? Yes, please do. So if you submit a journal article and it's 20 pages long,

and we allow for five pages, please just cut it and submit the five pages, and you can then sort of edit and do dot-dot-dot, or again write an explanatory sentence on top that this is part of an article. And we do not like to see a 20-page article. It's just a question of volume.

Concerning the use for travel necessary for research? Yes, good question. Can funding be used for travel and research travel? Again, because it's a salary replacement, you can use the time as you describe it in your application.

If your work plan has that you travel for three months or two months or six months, and you describe it and it is approved, then you can do that. We don't have a budget for travel outside of the fellowship. So, anything you need to do for the research will be your salary and that pays the stipend.

This next question asks whether one can step away from their fellowship at any point between the start and end dates, and this person specifically says that they sometimes, during the summer, go to do other work. It's an archaeologist. So, can you step away from your project during the fellowship?

The short answer is no. So, you cannot apply for a grant for one or two months, the fellowship. The fellowship program is a minimum of six months and a maximum of 12. If you were to do research for a few months and then go travel, like they could do work on it for four months at home and two months travel, that would work, or two months travel and then four months on the project, so you would come to the 6-month minimum.

That's the only way, you cannot interrupt the fellowship either. You can't say, oh, I'm doing four months here and then next semester I'll do another four, I mean, skip one this summer and then, this has to be continuous and full-time.

Those are probably the most important requirements of the fellowship. Having said that, we do have a two-month fellowship that's called Summer Stipends. You could apply through that program, if you were to apply in September for a Summer Stipend, that you can then take in the summer for two months. So, I would send you over to my colleague in Summer Stipend and hopefully you can apply for that.

Are we more likely to fund work on scholarly articles rather than books? Again, great question. As I said earlier, most people apply to write a manuscript or a book because of the length of the time that we offer, so the fellowship is all about buying you time to write. If you have a field that prefers scholarly articles, then that's perfectly fine, too. There are some fields like philosophy, they do articles.

So, we see articles They do three articles instead of a book or something. So, in that sense, again, there's no preference. It depends on the field and subject but it's perfectly acceptable.

Our next question is, do I need to be nominated by my institution to apply to the fellowships program? Oh, yes, I should have said that to our archaeology question. The Summer Stipends is the program where you need to be nominated by your institution, the Fellowships program does not have a nomination process, so you can apply without a nomination, individual scholars apply, and many from each institution.

All of the sample narratives on your website are about historical topics. Does that mean that work on contemporary issues won't be supported?

I'm not sure…[are all our projects historical projects?] You mean, they're all historical in a sense because most of the fields are doing historical work, even if it's music, musicology or art history, since that's all historical, …you're right.

I'm not sure what you mean by contemporary issues. It has to be humanities-related and it has to be research, it can't be policy. So contemporary issues have probably a little bit more need to justify the theoretical and methodological part of it, and a lot of social sciences are contemporary. I don't know where [your project is located], if I knew a little bit more about it I could say more.

Oh, … indigenous issues, yeah, thank you. If you write it as a project that looks at the issues from all sides, I would say yes. If you just look at it from one side, people will ask whether this borders on activism or it could [go down that road]. I'm not saying you do, but this is where contemporary issues run into questions. You just need to make sure that you have a well-rounded approach to the issues that you're talking about.

So, we are sort of [at the end], there are a few questions that have been asked that I'm going to circle back to and answer privately because they're quite specific. But if anybody else would like to ask more questions about the program or anything that we covered today, please feel free to do so now and we'll try to answer it.

Okay, so we just received a question about conflicts of interest in our letter writers. The person asked if it's okay to request a letter from someone with whom you've collaborated on editorial work or should you just choose the very best people to write about your project.

Yes, thank you for the question. There shouldn't be a conflict of interest in your letter. The letter is there to support you. So, yes, you should pick the best person to write about the project. The letter recommenders are not going to review, the conflict of interest would only be for the reviewer but not for the recommender. So you're free to pick any collaborator you've worked with before, that would be great.

We just have a question, if medical anthropology, okay, if humanistic projects on medicine or science are eligible for this program? Yes, they are, and in fact, we see more and more of them because the issues are important. And again, the way it works is that we throw it back to the applicants to tell us why this is important for the humanities and where the humanities part of your project is. So you can do contemporary research, but then I would broaden the perspective and say, for example, where does the issue come from historically? I would put something in the narrative that explains the relevance for the humanities or where your project's interpretive part is. It will be either the method or the question. So yes, they're eligible.

We have a question that is, if you work for any sort of institution other than a university, can the payment be directed through that institution for you? Don't see why not, but I'm not sure. I would ask you to send us an email and we'll ask our accounting office about that.

This is a question about database projects and what it means to include a sample in the appendices. Database projects are one of the types of projects that, for which, we asked for an appendix.

Let's see, database could be if you have statistics. … I would say, in general, if you don't need to have it, or if you think the reviewer will understand the narrative without the appendix, you don't have to have it for the project. Only if you think, I can't explain it to you without you seeing the data, that I don't know what it is that you're working on, I would add it. The same goes for visual material. If there's an art history project, and you want to talk about a certain picture, painting, or movie, or changing images, then you put in a page to clarify it, but if it's not necessary, if you think you can just go with the narrative, that's fine.

May one of my references be from my institution? Yes, absolutely fine and eligible, or it would be fine. If you can avoid it, and that's just based on review, what I've seen reviewers say, if you don't have to, I would, again, use the letter as a way to show your breadth and your network. It just looks

good if you have two separate letters, one from one institution, and then the other from somewhere else, [at least] for this program. But you can, it's not wrong to do it.

This question asks if, a project that uses the humanities, specifically history, to inform how we teach, would be considered eligible if the focus is on the utilization of humanities and not pedagogy?

Not sure I understand; if it's about how we teach, it would be a how-to book or like an educational book, which is not quite what we support, but I might not understand the question, right? Feel free to follow up with us by email.

So, we have another question relating to what sorts of projects from social science fields might count as the humanities. This person is asking about a study from international development studies, that field, and whether that would count as a humanities project.

Thanks for that. Again, international development organization approach to development. I am not familiar with that particular approach, but if you say it's part of social sciences, then the same goes for you as well [as I've said before]. If you can make a case that this is important for humanities research, then you should make it, and you are eligible to apply.

What you could do, you could take a social science approach and then make it relevant for humanities research. If that's something you can show and prove it in your narrative, you can do that. As I said, I don't know that particular approach, but it depends on how you can make it relevant to us or to the humanities.

This person asks, if you're a freelancer, can you work on a small project? I'm not sure. You can work on any project as a freelance consultant. If you apply, the same is true [as for all applicants], you have to apply for at least six months. If you want to do two months in the summer, you are also eligible for our Summer Stipends program. You don't have to be at an institution for that either. I don't know what a small project is. It has to go through the same review process as everybody else, so the size of the project doesn't matter, but it's more about what it is and how they review it.

So, this is an important question. Can you apply if you're an American citizen working in a non-American University, and in the first case in Asia? Good question. Yes, if you're an American citizen, you're eligible to apply from anywhere in the world. The Fellowship program is a non-residential program, so you can you can take it anywhere.

We have another question about whether it's okay to get a letter of recommendation from the museum field or from alt-academic sources. Yes, the short answer is yes, and I've seen letters from museums and other places like that, and again it depends on the project.

Okay. Well, we're sort of at the end of the question queue again, so, great, you want to wait for a few more? Officially, we still have five minutes. We can hang out, if not, if there are no more questions, I thank all of you for your time. If you have further questions, you can always email us. You can get in touch, even by phone. We'll have the recording of the webinar up in a couple of days, I hope, and they can look back at the questions as well. Our email is fellowships@neh.gov. Alright, great.

I wish I could see all of you, but I don't, so we'll see applications and wish you all the best. Great. And if we didn't get to your question, please feel free to email us at fellowships@neh.gov, happy to help there. Great. Thank you. Thank you. Have a good day. Bye.