National Endowment for the Humanities
Digital Projects for the Public
Frequently Asked Questions
Page 1 of 6

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

DIGITAL PROJECTS FOR THE PUBLIC

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(published March 14, 2022)

General information on digital projects

1.What distinguishes Discovery, Prototyping, and Production applications from one another?

Discovery applications outline the initial work to be done on a project. For example:

- early-stage consultations with humanities scholars and digital experts
- content research, narrative development, and platform design
- audience evaluation and platform selection

To be successful at the Discovery level, the project team members should have a solid grasp of the content and collections with which they will work and be looking for a platform to engage the content, or they should have chosen a subject and a platform and be looking to interpret the humanities content. In either case, the team must include both content and media experts.

Discovery grants culminate in the production of a design document that describes both the humanities content and the technical and creative details of the platform(s) that will support it.

Prototyping applications require a full design document as *part of* the application package. Applicants will have already refined and vetted the humanities content of the project with their

National Endowment for the Humanities
Digital Projects for the Public
Frequently Asked Questions
Page 2 of 6

scholarly team and will have chosen a specific digital approach to the content that best suits the audience's needs.

Prototyping grants culminate in the testing and creation of a digital prototype that best displays the key features and humanities content of the project.

Production applications require a working prototype that demonstrates how the humanities content will be conveyed to an audience. These applications should detail the steps that the applicants will take to build from the prototype, complete the project, and make it available to the public. Production applicants should describe evaluation, design, audience outreach, public programming, and publicity for the project.

2. Do we need to use innovative or experimental technology for this program?

Not necessarily. A competitive application in the Digital Projects for the Public program will utilize platforms and approaches that best serve the chosen content and reach its targeted audiences in an accessible and engaging manner. Innovative technologies are encouraged only insofar as they serve this goal. Reviewers will not give priority to proposals utilizing innovative or experimental technologies, but will rather judge them on the ability to impact public understanding of the humanities. This program does not support projects that seek only to develop or produce platforms. If your project primarily involves content agnostic platform creation, you may wish to consider the [Digital Humanities Advancement Grants](#) program.

3.What advice do you give applicants who have less digital experience but have worthy humanities projects?

Less experienced applicants frequently find it advantageous to form a partnership with a more seasoned digital team. Discovery grants can help support these partnerships from the earliest stages of a project, whether they are in the form of consultations with well-established digital media teams or collaborations that result in the sharing of platforms or code.

4. Does this program fund resources for students and teachers?

Projects should be geared mainly for public audiences; the budget and activities should reflect this focus. However, a project can include resources that help students and teachers explore the humanities content and themes central to the project. Such resources might include classroom-specific hands-on activities, lesson plans, scholarly essays, maps, and/or timelines.

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. More than a topic, a theme considers the relevant humanities scholarship and offers a broad conceptual framework for understanding the material. For example, "Women in the Civil War" is a topic. It describes a subject but does not reveal an interpretive approach. On the other hand, "Women played important economic roles during the Civil War" is a theme. It identifies a topic and also suggests what audiences might learn about it.

National Endowment for the Humanities
Digital Projects for the Public
Frequently Asked Questions
Page 3 of 6

2. 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.

3. When should I start consulting with scholars about a project?

As a general rule, the earlier scholars are involved in a project, the better. Projects recommended for funding are usually ones in which scholars have helped shape the project's conceptual framework. Discovery grants are designed to support scholarly involvement from a project's outset.

4. Is it okay to rely on a single scholar for a project?

Projects that depend on input from a single scholar are not competitive. Working with a number of scholars allows projects to explore a diverse range of interpretive possibilities.

5. How do I find the right scholarly advisers for a project?

There are many ways to find scholars for your project. Check with your local college or university to see if any faculty members have relevant expertise or could suggest the names of other scholars. You can also peruse bookstores (either real or online), libraries, and Web resources to see who has published on topics related to your project. State humanities councils often maintain lists of scholars who have participated in public programs. You can also contact professional associations or consult published directories of scholars.

6. How much should I pay scholarly advisers?

There is no set fee for scholars and other professionals working on your project. Some recipients pay 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.

Preparing and submitting your application

1.What constitutes a good title for my project?

Your title should be brief (not exceeding 125 characters, including spaces and punctuation) and descriptive of the project. It should also be free of specialized language that might not be understood by the general public.

Avoid using a main title that requires clarification by the 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., 1776-1990."

Use words and phrases that are informative and specific rather than puzzling or intriguing. For example, "A Cultural History of the Telephone and Telecommunications in America, 1950-2015" is clearer than "Ten Digits and a Party Line: A Study of a Number and a Nation."

National Endowment for the Humanities
Digital Projects for the Public
Frequently Asked Questions
Page 4 of 6

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

2. What are the most common mistakes that applicants make?

Applicants often fail to provide as much information as evaluators expect. They must discuss the project in considerable detail, articulating clearly their concept for the project and the humanities issues that the project deals with, even when the proposal is for a Discovery grant. Applicants should have done considerable research on the subject and consulted with scholars about their ideas; they should also explain the scholars' contributions in the proposal.

In addition, applicants sometimes propose projects that fit poorly with the aims of the Digital Projects for the Public program. For example, the program does not fund projects that primarily seek to produce digital archives or online repositories for materials (for such projects, consider programs offered by the Division of Preservation and Access). Applicants must present a clear interpretive framework and analysis that incorporates recent scholarship. They must also present this content so as to interest and attract a general public audience.

3. Must we submit our application through Grants.gov?

Yes. See D1. Application Package and D3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for information on the registrations necessary to submit your application.

4. If I am an individual producer unaffiliated with a nonprofit organization, may I submit a Digital Projects for the Public application?

No. As described in Section C1 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, eligible applicants include U.S. nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, public and 501(c)(3) accredited institutions of higher education, state and local governmental agencies, and federally recognized Native American tribal governments. Individuals are not eligible to apply; independent producers frequently partner with eligible organizations to submit an NEH application. 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 should make substantive contributions to the success of the project.** If the application is funded, the lead applicant assumes all programmatic, financial, and legal responsibilities of the award. For further information, see 2 CFR §200.332 for recipient responsibilities for managing and monitoring subrecipients. Contact a program officer at publicpgms@neh.gov for a list of recent grant recipients, which includes nonprofit organizations.

5. May the project director also serve as the institutional grant administrator?

No. The project director may not serve as the institutional grant administrator. The project director is the person directly in charge of the conduct of the funded project. The institutional grant administrator 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. All financial reports and prior approval requests such as budget revisions, extensions of the period of performance, and changes in key personnel must be signed or countersigned

National Endowment for the Humanities
Digital Projects for the Public
Frequently Asked Questions
Page 5 of 6

by the institutional grant administrator. Similarly, official correspondence from NEH to a recipient (for example, an offer letter, the award document, an extension, a supplement or amendment) will be addressed to the institutional grant administrator and copied to the project director. Because the project director's involvement in the project is critical to its success, the replacement of the project director or the co-director or a substantial reduction in the level of their effort (for example, an unanticipated absence for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in the time devoted to the project) requires prior written approval from NEH.

6. May the same project director or producer submit an application for two different projects at the same time?

Yes. Each application must clearly explain how the project director would allocate time if the applicant were awarded more than one grant. Overlapping project costs between two or more applications for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets are not permitted. However, applicants may seek funding from other NEH programs for **complementary** aspects of the same overall project.

7. Our previous application was not selected for funding. May we revise and resubmit our application for a future competition?

Yes. Applicants may revise and resubmit a proposal that was not recommended for funding. All applicants may request the evaluators' assessments of their proposal. This information is useful as you continue working on the project and decide whether to resubmit.

8. When we apply through Grants.gov, how should we submit our sample (and, for a Production application, our prototype)?

You must submit your sample (and, for a Production application, your prototype) as a URL. If necessary, provide instructions for accessing the sample.

9. How do the application deadlines work?

You must submit your application using Grants.gov by the deadline stipulated in section D4 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. NEH does not accept late submissions except for the limited reasons outlined in our late submission policy.

Budget and grant funds

1. If we receive NEH funding, may we also accept funding from other sources?

Yes. We encourage applicants to approach a range of both non-federal and federal funders. As a reminder, overlapping project costs between two or more applications for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets are not permitted.

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

No.

National Endowment for the Humanities
Digital Projects for the Public
Frequently Asked Questions
Page 6 of 6

Distribution

1.What expectations does NEH have for the distribution of a project?

NEH-funded projects should be offered for broad distribution to the widest possible audience. For Digital Projects for the Public grants, this means that the project's technologies/ platforms/ approaches should be accessible to a wide audience. Projects that make use of technologies, platforms, or approaches that require significant audience investment are discouraged.

Furthermore, as a taxpayer-supported federal agency, NEH endeavors to make the products of its awards available to the broadest possible audience. Our goal is for scholars, educators, students, and the American public to have ready and easy access to the wide range of NEH award products. All other considerations being equal, NEH gives preference to those projects that provide free access to the public and employ the most accessible technologies.