0:05
Hello and welcome to the free online information session for the National Endowment for the Humanities Public Scholars program.

0:16
My name is Mark Silver. I'm a program officer here in the Division of Research Programs and I've been overseeing the Public Scholars program since it began in 2015. I'm here today with Gwen Yates who is the program analyst for the program. We've planned the session to last for one hour, from two o'clock our time until three o'clock.

0:44
And I'm planning to speak for about half of that time--25 or 30 minutes--and then to allow questions from you for the remainder of that time.

1:04
Here's an overview of the topics that I'm planning to cover.

1:10
I'll start off talking about the goals of the program and its scope. I will talk about the eligibility requirements that we have and will go into some key details of the program in terms of our expectations for the time commitment that you make to your work while you're holding an award. We'll look at the review criteria, the application materials that you have to submit, and what you need to be prepared to do in terms of actually submitting your application through our grant acceptance portal. And then we'll get to your questions.

1:54
You should feel free to submit your questions at any time during the presentation and we will accumulate them here to handle them at the end.

2:04
You should see on your interface a bar that says questions that has box that you can use to type in questions to submit them to us. My hope is by the time we get to the end of the session that you will be able to make a decision about whether this program is right for you, and if you decide that it is right for you, that you'll understand what it takes to submit an effective application to the program.

2:38
We will, by the way, be posting a recording of this session after it has ended so if you can't stay for the whole thing, or you want to come back to refer to it later as you're preparing an application, it will be available on the NEH website. It may take us a couple of days to prepare it and post it. But we do plan to do that. Alright, let's get started then. First, I want to talk about the goals of the program.

3:08
Our overarching goal is to support the creation of well-researched non-fiction books in the humanities written for a broad public. We also in doing this want to encourage non-academic writers to deepen their engagement with the humanities by strengthening the research underlying their books.

3:36

We know that deep research takes time and effort and that it's not always possible to put as much research into a book as one might want to, so we want to help solve that problem with this program.

We also have as a goal to encourage academic writers in the humanities to communicate the significance of their research to the broadest possible range of readers.

It takes a lot of time and thought to write effectively for a general audience. And if you're a professional scholar, it's in some ways easier to write for other scholars. That's probably what you were trained to do. So writing for a general audience requires some adjustment. It may require you to find a new voice.

We want to encourage you through this program to make that adjustment.

The scope of the program: we welcome applications in all areas of the humanities regardless of geographic or chronological focus.

If you look at the list of awards we've made in this program so far-- and there are about a hundred and thirty one awards that we've made so far--the list is dominated by projects with an American focus, but we don't have any preference for projects with an American focus and you're welcome to submit proposals having to do with any geographic area or chronological focus.

The books must be written in a readily accessible style and they must frame their topics to have wide appeal. That's absolutely key to this program. If you're not planning to do that, and that's not an interest of yours, then this is not the right program for you.

And as the slide says, books written primarily for an audience of professional scholars are not suitable. So that's just to reiterate the point.

The next slide shows some recent and forthcoming books.

At this point there are about 50 books that have either been already published or that have announced a release date with the sponsorship of this program. Here are three examples. On the left is

The Three-cornered War: The Union, The Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the fight for the West. This is by Megan Kate Nelson who is an independent scholar. In the middle is

Sarah Dry's book Waters of the World: The Story of the Scientists who Unraveled the Mysteries of our Oceans, Atmosphere, and Ice Sheets and Made the Planet Whole. Sarah Dry is also an independent scholar. And then on the right, a book by Eric Cline, who teaches at George

Washington University, called Digging up Armageddon: The Search for the Lost City of Solomon.

7:09
Before I go any further, I want to pause for a moment and talk about what we mean by the humanities. The founding legislation of the National Endowment for the Humanities actually lists a number of disciplines that are meant to be encompassed by this term humanities. The legislation also makes clear that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but it does mention these disciplines:

7:38
literature and language, history, history and theory of the arts, philosophy and ethics, archaeology, comparative religion, jurisprudence, and those social sciences employing humanistic methods. If you are uncertain about whether your project would fall within the humanities or not, we're happy to discuss that question with you and give you some guidance about it. So feel free to get in touch if you have questions about it.

8:08, I'm going to, by the way, put our contact information up as the last slide of the presentation.

8:20
What about eligibility requirements? The program is open to all US citizens-- it doesn't matter where you are in the world--and then also to foreign nationals who have been living in the US for the three years preceding the February 5th 2020 application deadline.

8:45
Currently enrolled students are not eligible to apply, and we also have a previous publication requirement.

8:54
You can meet this requirement either with a book published with a commercial or university press (and that need not have been a book directed at a general audience, by the way), or with three articles or essays in publications that reach a large audience. We sometimes get questions from prospective applicants about whether their publication record qualifies.

9:24
If you're uncertain about that, this is something we can try to answer for you. If you get in touch with us and ask us about your particular list of publications, we can give you an answer about that. No advanced degree is required to apply to this program and no institutional affiliation is required either.

9:54
In fact on that point, we have a special encouragement in place in this program for independent writers. The program encourages applications from writers who are not currently affiliated with a college or university. Maybe you're a full-time writer or you're a journalist or a magazine writer or an editor or you work at a museum.

10:26
Or maybe you wait tables and you write on the side. If you have a suitable project, we want you to be aware of this opportunity. Or maybe you have only a short-term affiliation with a college or university.

10:48

We know there are people out there who have one foot in the academic world. Perhaps you teach a writing course or you have a temporary teaching position. Again, we want you to be aware of this program and the support that it could offer you. None of this, by the way, is to suggest that we don't want to hear from university or college professors. Professional academics are entirely welcome to apply to the program. We absolutely do want to see those applications.

11:21
It's just that our application pool tends to be dominated by professional scholars already, and we want to broaden our reach to other kinds of applicants because we know you're out there.

11:36
Next slide: the project types not supported by the program. There are a number of types of projects that we do not support and you need to be aware of these. You should check the complete list of prohibited projects and activities in the notice of funding opportunity on our website.

11:57
But this list I have on the slide shows the most common ways in which we disappoint potential applicants, by not funding the things listed. So those are: fiction, and that includes historical fiction or philosophical fiction. Also creative nonfiction. So if you are planning to write a book in which you will invent scenes or imagine dialogue, then that will be disqualifying for this program.

12:35
We do not support autobiography or memoir in this program, or books for children, or young adults, works of graphic fiction or nonfiction, and we do not support dissertation revisions either.

12:52
Here are a number of key details regarding the awards. We are buying your time with these awards, so we're quite strict in these rules. The duration is 6 to 12 months. So just to break that down: the minimum duration is six months of full-time work on your project or the part-time equivalent of that. So you could for example work halftime for 12 months on your

13:27
project and that would meet this requirement of a minimum of six months' duration.

13:33
The maximum duration is 12 months. And that's true even if you're working part time on the project. So you cannot run your calendar longer than 12 months under any circumstances.

13:52
The minimum time commitment is half-time for the duration of your award period, so you cannot take a break from your project. You can't work less than half time at any point during the award period. You must hold the word continuously, as the slide says.

14:14
How much money are we awarding? The stipend is $5,000 per full-time month. So the maximum award is sixty thousand dollars, which would be for 12 full-time months. And we do reduce dollar amounts accordingly in the event that you're working part time or you're working less than 12 full months on your project.

14:39

The application deadline is February 5th 2020 and you will hear an answer from us in early August of 2020. So it takes some months for us to review your application and give you an answer and you need to account for that in your planning.

15:00

If you were to be notified that you have won an award in August of 2020 the earliest possible date for you to begin holding the award would be September 1st. So that's almost right away. On the other hand, we would allow you to defer the start of your grant period for up to one year. So the latest possible start date is September 1st of 2020.

15:32

So again, as you're planning your project and your schedule you need to be well aware of the timeline I've presented here and take that into account in your in your planning.

15:50

Typical activities and products in this program: we support research in primary and secondary sources. That could include interviews and could include field work of some kind. We support travel to archives and to other research sites and then also writing and revision of your manuscript.

16:18

The typical products are print books, generally published with a trade press or with a university press that has a very strong distribution.

16:31

We also see people producing ebooks and/or audio books as a part of their projects as well, and you are permitted to propose online materials intended to supplement a print book, but the primary product in that case would still have to be a print book.

17:01

Next. The next slide shows the review criteria. Every application will be reviewed by a panel of external peer reviewers. And these are the criteria we instruct them to use in their evaluations.

17:21

As an applicant you absolutely must keep these criteria in mind as you're preparing your application and you should try to write the application to answer these criteria.

17:36

So, let me take a moment to go through them.

17:42

The first one is the appeal and intellectual significance of the proposed book for general readers.

17:54

This is extremely important. It's the number one criterion for a reason. It is in many ways the most important criterion and both aspects of this--the appeal and also the intellectual significance--are important.

18:12

So your topic should be framed in a way to make it engaging and interesting, the writing should carry the reader along without undue effort, but the book should also have substance to it. Second, the applicant's record of research and experience in interpreting the humanities for

general audiences. As an applicant, you want to think about how to highlight your record in these areas both on your resume and then also in your application narrative.

18:49

The third criterion is the quality of the conception, definition, organization, and description of the project and the breadth and depth of the humanities research underlying the project.

19:04

Your project, in other words, should be well-defined. It should be well organized. The book should be based on rigorous research and you should show that you are aware of the relevant sources and of related books in your area in your application.

19:26

The fourth criterion is the quality of the writing sample and the applicant's clarity of expression.

19:34

The writing sample is extremely important in this program.

19:40

Because that's where you're demonstrating for the evaluators that you really can write for a popular audience.

19:49

It's best to submit a draft chapter from your proposed book as the writing sample if you can, but if that's not possible, make sure that your selection really showcases your skill in writing for a general reader. That's the most important thing that the evaluators will be looking for in your writing sample. The fifth criterion is the feasibility and appropriateness

20:19

of the proposed plan of work, the soundness and probable reach of the dissemination plan, and the likelihood that the applicant will complete the project.

20:32

In the plan of work you need to present a clear schedule. It needs to be plausible that you'll be able to adhere to that schedule and you will need to address the question of dissemination. How are you going to publish the book? How will you get the word out about it?

20:56

You will want to think about the press that you're going to publish the book with, and in general the bigger the print run that the press is able to give you, and the stronger their publicity and distribution operation, the better.

21:21

Next slide: application materials. So what do we ask you to submit to us in your application package? First of all,

21:37

let me say that there are page limits here in this list and you must adhere to the page limits. You risk disqualification of your application entirely if you don't follow these instructions about the page limit for each component part of the application. So what do we ask for? First of all a four-page narrative statement, and you should follow the format

22:06

that we explain in the notice of funding opportunity (the announcement and instructions for applying).

We also want a 1000-character summary of your proposal, a one-page bibliography, a two-page resume or C.V., a 20-page writing sample, and a publisher's letter if applicable. So if you have interest from a publisher or if your book is under contract with a publisher,

you should submit a letter with your application from a representative of the press indicating the level of commitment to your project. If your book is under contract and you've discussed the size of a possible print run with the publisher,

I would encourage you to include information about that in the letter as well, and also any plans for book tours or other publicity that would be connected with your book. Then the last item is two letters of reference,

and those are not actually due at the time of the application deadline. They are due somewhat later--for the coming round, those will be due by February 26th, 2020. And you should coach your letter writers to look at those evaluation criteria that we discussed a couple of slides ago and to address those evaluation criteria in their letters of reference.

You should also coach your letter writers to specifically address your proposed project rather than simply talking about previous work that you may have done and then ending with a line to say, "And I'm sure the proposed book will be just as good." It's much more effective to have a letter writer address the specifics of your proposed project.

The last note on this page says no budget is required,

and that's because as I explained before the dollar amount of the award is based on the number of months that you commit to as your grant period We have a number of resources for applicants that you should be aware of. The single

most important one is that notice of funding opportunity which is available as a link on the same webpage that you used to register for this online information session. The notice of funding opportunity is about a 20-page document and it contains all the instructions for assembling and formatting your materials as well as instructions for submitting them to us. So if you're not familiar with that document yet and you think you're interested in the program, that would definitely be your next step--to read through the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

We also have available on the website sample application narratives. These are five examples of successful applications that we received in the program, and those will repay study. There's a list as well as of recently funded projects and another document with frequently asked questions that you may want to refer to as well.

All of these things are available on the NEH website at the link on the slide here. It's the main Public Scholars page. Then the last item on this list, and not to be neglected, is advice from the NEH staff.

26:14

This is the email address that you can use to reach the program and also a phone number. We are not able to comment on draft applications, but we can respond to specific questions that you have about your application or about the presentation of your project to us.

26:44

A word about the mechanics of submitting the application: you will as your first step need to register at the website grants.gov. You need to have an account with grants.gov in order to submit an application.

27:05

Once you have registered, please create an individual applicant profile in your account. That's what I have listed here as Step 2. You will not be able to submit an application to the Public Scholars program if you haven't set up an individual applicant profile. The red bar that says "apply" here will be grayed out. You won't be able to click on it.

27:36

That's because this program is only open to individual applicants. And if you have not set up an individual applicant profile, the grants.gov system will not realize that you're eligible to submit an application to the Public Scholars program.

27:55

This is probably the number one difficulty that people seem to have with submitting their application. They have failed to set up an individual applicant profile. Third point: you want to allow several days to submit your application in case there is some technical problem, or

28:15

you run into a hurdle of some kind with the grants.gov submission process. Especially if you're doing it for the first time, it can be a little bit cumbersome, so allow extra time for that.

28:30

Then the last point is that there is a helpline run by grants.gov.

28:36

It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and it's 1-800-518-4726. The people at that helpline will be much better able to diagnose a technical problem that you might be having than we here at NEH will be, so I encourage you to call the help line at grants.gov if you are having a technical problem with submitting your application to us. I've heard good reports about the help that they do offer at that helpline.

29:13

All right, so that is the presentation that I've prepared. I think some of you have been submitting questions along the way, or if you have a question that you'd like to submit now, please go ahead and do so and we'll begin answering them. And what do we have?

29:36

Okay, The first question is can you put in more than one proposal to the program and see which book you win with? The answer is no. Each person can only submit one proposal

30:06

in each round of this program. How detailed do I need to be about my methodology and secondary sources in my project description, assuming there's a bibliography? This is a good question.

30:30

You will as I mentioned be submitting a one-page bibliography as part of your application materials, so that will be evaluated quite closely and evaluators will begin to glean a sense of your approach and your background reading as you're doing the project from the bibliography.

30:56

But you should certainly discuss to some extent in your narrative statement what approach you're taking to your project and how you're going about doing it.

31:12

It's difficult I think to be too detailed in that regard. In other words, we seldom hear evaluators saying oh she told me too much about how she's going to go about doing this project. Usually we hear the opposite lament, that one didn't provide enough detail in this regard.

31:37

However, you only have the four pages in which to make your case. So I would also suggest that you think about the overall presentation that you're making in that four-page statement and how you're balancing the different tasks that you have to accomplish in that space. You should not neglect the question of the intellectual significance of the project as a whole. In other words, you don't want to lose sight of the forest

32:12

for the trees as you're you're making your case.

32:17

The other thing I would say about methodology and discussions of methodology is that if you become all-consumed with the minutiae of methodology in your application, that could raise a little bit of a red flag for evaluators in terms of your ability to speak to general readers who may be again more interested in the big picture than in some of the minutiae and details.

32:49

So if you are engaging in an in-depth methodological discussion in some portion of your four-page statement, you want to be sure that your writing sample shows your ability to keep those concerns out of sight to the extent practicable for the general reader who may be again somewhat less concerned with the details of that kind.

33:20

Is the opportunity only available to authors published in magazines that aren't professional in nature? What about things like master's theses? So this is a question about our previous publication requirement, which I mentioned in the presentation, and what kinds of publications would qualify you.

33:49

So this person is wondering if you had published an article in a professional journal, would articles in professional journals

34:16

allow you to qualify? The answer is no. We don't allow you to use articles published in scholarly journals or publications that are mainly read by professionals in a particular field to qualify you for the program.

34:37

A master's thesis would also not meet the requirement for previous publications because if you have not published a book with a commercial or university press, then you're using the other way in, which is articles or essays published in a publication that reaches a large national or international audience and a master's thesis would not meet that requirement.

35:10

How important is it to have a book contract before you apply? This is a good question. It is to your advantage to have a book contract, I think that's fair to say. However, we have funded a number of people who did not have book contracts at the time that they applied to us.

35:39

If you have a book contract, you're clearly going to be helping yourself on that criterion that has to do with the dissemination plan because you're not just hoping that you'll get a contract. You actually have a contract. So your dissemination plan is therefore more sound.

36:02

I can imagine a contract, however, that might perhaps be with a very small press that is only thinking in terms of printing say 500 copies of the book. That's a relatively low number for this program. I can imagine in other words a contract that looks rather unambitious in terms of its dissemination plan

36:32

potentially counting against an applicant to the program. So to try to sum up: having a contract in general is going to be better than not having a contract. It does help. However, we do have many examples of people who are at an earlier stage in their project than that, and they don't yet have a contract.

36:57

Your application will be strengthened if you do not have a contract by such things as having a very compelling idea that is scoring highly on criterion #1, which is the appeal and intellectual significance for the general reader, so that evaluators are persuaded that your project definitely will get a contract when the time comes to seek one. Your case is also helped, if you do not already have a contract, by your previous

37:32

record of publication, particularly if you have published one or more books already that reached a wide general audience. Then having a contract in hand becomes slightly less important, I would say.

37:50

So to sum up again: In general, yes, the contract is to your advantage but do not despair and do not decide not to apply if you don't have a contract yet. So this next question is from someone whose project has a specific regional focus and the question is, is that okay? Or do I need to try

38:20

to show the broader significance of the project? This is a good question as well. My first reaction is why not try to show the broader significance of your project? I think that will only help. So let's say you're writing a history of the state of Mississippi.

38:49

Would the regional focus in that case be problematic? I think it depends on how you frame the project and how you explain to people why that particular regional history matters and why it would matter to someone who has never thought about that particular region before or doesn't consider themselves to have any kind of

39:18

investment in it. So how will you hook that reader? How will you make the case for the significance of the project to the reader who does not already have some natural connection to your topic? And that's a key question for any applicant to this program actually, regardless of the geographic focus that might be involved.

39:42

Does the category of nonfiction books include textbooks? You may not propose a textbook for this program. You may be interested in writing a book that is potentially useful in classrooms, and that's a different matter--that sort of book is entirely welcome.

40:10

However, I would not frame the application as writing a book that will be useful in classrooms. It really should be making the case that the book will be of interest to a wide range of readers whether or not they happen to be taking a class related to the subject or not.

40:33

But if you think your book incidentally would be of interest to students who are enrolled in a class or that a professor might be interested in assigning it, it doesn't hurt to mention this but it would not in itself be sufficient in most cases to clinch an award in this program.

40:59

Does the program support books that may be published by a commercial press? Yes. In fact many books that have been supported by the program are published by trade presses.

41:21

I think the implication here is, I might be making money from this project down the road and is that a problem? The answer is no. We are aware that even in cases where you may get an advance from the publisher to work on a book that much of that advance will not come into your hands until you've actually submitted the manuscript. There's room in other words for supporting the research--the legwork and the brain work--that goes into writing a manuscript before it is submitted and that's where we see ourselves as coming into the picture with this program.

42:04

Is architecture and design included in your definition of humanities? I would say in most cases, yes, though it depends again somewhat on the framing of the project.

42:25

If you're talking about the history of architecture or the ways that people interact with particular kinds of buildings or the problems and issues that might arise in trying to solve particular kinds

of design problems, I think that could all fall within the humanities provided again that you're writing in a non-technical way for the curious general reader.

43:02

Next is a question about meeting our publication requirement: does the book that I use to meet the previous publication requirement need to be a single authored manuscript? The answer is yes. We do not allow you to use a co-authored book to meet the previous publication requirement.

43:24

Would serving as an editor to a book allow you to meet the previous publication requirement? No, serving as an editor would not meet that requirement. You must have actually written the book. You must be the author of the book.

43:48

The project I would like to propose for this Fellowship is on the same topic as my doctoral dissertation. However, the project is not a rewrite of the dissertation but rather a book manuscript that poses a different argument. Is that okay?

44:15

I listed among the projects that we do not support dissertation revisions. So you can't propose a dissertation revision for this program and succeed. However, this person who's asking the question is saying the book I want to propose is on the same topic as my dissertation, but it's not actually a dissertation revision. Is that okay? The answer is that it could be.

44:47

It might be a good idea to call up and we will discuss this in a little bit more detail, but I can in theory imagine a book that would be on the same topic as a dissertation previously written but would not follow the same chapter structure, would not be using most of the same materials in making the case, and would not be repurposing text that you wrote for the dissertation in the book.

45:18

It would be important in the narrative statement to explain what you're doing and I would try if I were in your shoes to come up with ways to make the case that you're not doing a dissertation revision. So perhaps you would say something like my dissertation had these five chapters and my book has this other, you know, totally different set of seven chapters or four chapters or whatever is the case.

45:48

I would try to address the question head on and to muster as much evidence as you can to make the case that you are not revising your dissertation. Again, if you'd like to call us up or send us an email to have a more detailed discussion about it, that would be fine. Is it required that the book be entirely written by the end of the award period? The answer is no. You're welcome to carve out a particular portion of your project to accomplish with the grant,

46:49

and you need not finish the entire project during the grant period. Maybe you are working on a six chapter book and you plan to write the first three chapters during the 12-month grant period but you do not plan to finish the entire book. That's okay. I would, however, try to address the

question of how you will ultimately finish the project in your narrative statement. Because remember among the evaluation criteria

47:20
is the likelihood of completion as well as the appropriateness and feasibility of the plan of work.

47:32
So you don't want to create the impression that you're going to be working like gangbusters on the project during the grant period but then you have no idea how you would ever finish the book after the grant period. So try to address that question of what would happen between the end of the grant and the submission of the manuscript and then the ultimate publication, filling that gap for the reader of your application.

48:00
Is there a list of university presses considered to have strong distribution or of the criteria used to designate this? No, we don't have a published list of such presses and this is one thing that we ask our.

48:29
external evaluators to think about as they're evaluating each application based on those criteria. They have knowledge about the relative merits of various presses out there including university presses as well as trade presses.

48:55
So it is something of a judgment that we would ask our evaluators to make, but you might think about putting some questions to a particular university press that you might be interested in working with about the potential size of the print run and what plans they might have for distribution of the book in trying to evaluate the press on that score yourself as part of your negotiation process

49:30
with the press. Generally speaking, and I won't name names, but the more well-known university presses tend to have name recognition partly because they have strong distribution operations. So the other thing to say about this is that our evaluators will be always balancing

49:59
a number of different factors about your project one against another and the particular press that you're publishing with is one factor among several that they're thinking about as they give us advice about the merits of your project.

50:15
Does NEH help with finding a publisher or is that strictly up to the author? If so, is there a penalty if an author can't find a publisher? The answer is that it is up to you to find a publisher and make arrangements with a publisher. We don't we don't offer advice or formal help in that regard.

50:45
The second part of the question was, is there a penalty if the author cannot find a publisher? The answer is no. So if you submit a proposal to us and you state that you don't have a publisher yet, but we give you a grant anyway, and then it turns out that you never do find a publisher, that's on us. That was a calculated risk that we took in approving the application and we hope that it won't happen, but we would not impose a penalty on you. As long as you had adhered to what you said

you were going to do in the application, and if that included looking for a publisher at a later stage and you look for a publisher and fail to find one, then we would not impose a penalty on you as the grant recipient in that case.

If you don't have a contract or even an agent yet, how can you imagine how can you answer questions like print run? Obviously, you cannot speak to that question and we understand that may well be the case with an earlier stage project.

So speaking to print run would only be in the case where a publisher is interested or is already committed to the project and the publisher's letter is speaking to the dissemination plan.

It would be in a letter from potential publisher where we would hope that we would see some information about the print run, or where it would be to your advantage if the publisher is able to speak to those numbers.

Next is a question about the 1,000-character project summary that we asked for. This was listed among the application materials on one of my earlier slides. In addition to submitting the four-page narrative statement, we want a digest version of the of the project as well. And this will actually be one of the last things that you submit as part of the application process. It's a blank on one of the forms that you will submit through grants.gov and it says enter a 1,000-character project description. It's not 1000 words. It's 1,000 characters. So it's quite short.

But we will use this project summary in our evaluation materials that we submit to the external evaluators. It will appear on the cover sheet of your project and we use it later in our own internal review here as well, as a shorthand version of your project.

It doesn't mean that the full narrative statement won't be read, because it will be, but the digest version that you provide for us is still quite important in terms of representing in brief what the project is about. So my advice to you as an applicant would be don't be taken by surprise at that moment when you're submitting your application and you're asked to submit a 1000-character project summary.

Some people submit a project summary that duplicates the first paragraph of the narrative statement. Some other people pull out some key sentences from their narrative statement and assemble them in a coherent way. Some people write a new statement to fulfill that function of the thousand-character summary. I think any of those approaches is fine. The main thing is don't be taken by surprise, and be able to provide a summary that does capture the significance of your project in very brief fashion.

How strongly are the letters of reference weighted in evaluations? We leave this to some extent up to individual evaluators, each of whom is asked to evaluate the whole file and give us a verdict essentially, or a rating, of the file. Some people will look more closely at the letters of reference. Others will look less closely at them and weigh them less heavily. So it really depends on the particular reader. I would say generally they are important. They're particularly important

in helping an evaluator who's not close to the area of the project understand why the project matters and what is significant about it.

56:26
So you should think of your letter writers as in a way making the case for your project one more time, from a slightly different perspective, for the evaluator. As I said before, the most effective letters of reference are ones that speak in very specific terms about your proposed project and that address the evaluation criteria with regard to the proposed project rather than speaking in generalities

57:03
about your qualities as a writer or a scholar or a person. Is the writing sample 20 pages single-spaced or double-spaced? Does the page limit include endnotes or is it that for the text only?

57:31
The answer is the 20-page writing sample should be double-spaced. And notes, if you have them, must fit within that 20-page limit. There are some specific instructions about writing samples in the notice of funding opportunity.

57:52
So certainly consult that statement of requirements for all the details about the writing sample, but you are allowed to submit a previous publication as your writing sample. So you may be sending us scanned pages from a previous article or book and that's allowable. If you do that though, you must still adhere to the length limit. So we want you to do a little bit of arithmetic to figure out

58:30
how many pages of double-spaced typescript you're submitting to us.

58:38
Even if you're giving us a PDF of published of pages from a published book, you might want to count the number of words on a particular page and then do the computation versus 20 manuscript pages to make sure that you're not exceeding our length limit with the writing sample. We do have to police that strictly so that we don't place an undue burden on our evaluators. Is it possible to reimburse myself from grant funds for travel and time associated with research already conducted for this manuscript, which is under contract?

59:18
We award you the money. We don't require you to do something particular with it because as I explained we don't ask for a budget with these applications. So if you've already spent money that's your own on a project and you have the influx of the grant money, then that new money is yours to

1:00:00
use in support of the project. So if you want to think of it as reimbursing yourself, I suppose you could think of it that way and that would be okay with us. Is there is a tax implication behind that question?

1:00:18
Maybe there is a tax implication and we cannot speak to tax implications of our awards and you would need to consult the IRS about that, but apart from that question, there's no problem.

1:00:37

What do you consider full-time? If an applicant is retired, for instance, and is committed to devoting all their time writing the book, does that suffice if they are applying for the full $60,000 award? Okay. So this is going to be the last question I'll answer and it's about time commitment. What do we consider full-time to be?

1:00:59

Generally we think in terms of a 40-hour work week, so you should think of a time commitment as meeting that minimum threshold. If you have a teaching position and you're holding one of our awards, you cannot teach and hold a full-time award. If you're holding our award part-time, say halftime, then you must have a half-time course reduction at your home institution as well.

1:01:36

If you are committed to applying all of your time to the award, so you're working on it full-time, then we would consider that full-time and you could apply for 12 full time months, which is the $60,000 maximum award. Okay. It's just after 3:00 o'clock

1:02:06

here in the Eastern time zone, so we're going to end our webinar now-- our online information session. Thank you all for your interest in the program. I hope you found it useful. If you have additional questions that we were not able to answer during this time, feel free to use the contact information on the screen to email us or to call us. The email address again

1:02:32

is publicscholars@neh.gov. The telephone number is 202-606-8200. Thank you again for watching. Goodbye.