NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY BUILDING CHALLENGE GRANTS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Overview

1. I am the prospective project director of an Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grants application and have looked at the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Where should I start?

You should read the NOFO in its entirety, but the following points may help to get you started:

- From the beginning, partner with a research development specialist or grant administrator at your institution to work together on different parts of the application.
- Study **A1. Purpose** and decide if the Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grants program is a good match for your project. Compare your ideas with **D6. Funding Restrictions** to make sure you are applying for activities or costs that are allowed in this program. Consider the information about **Related funding opportunities (H. Other Information)** to decide whether some or all of your project might find success in other NEH programs.
- Focus on the narrative instructions in **D2. Content and Form of Application Submission** to craft a compelling presentation of your project's scope and humanities significance. While composing your narrative, keep the **E1. Review Criteria** list close at hand to make sure your application responds to each of the evaluation criteria in the appropriate sections of the narrative.
- Factor in compliance with various federal laws in **F2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements** and the timing and budget estimate for your project.
- Assemble other attachments described in **D2. Content and Form of Application Submission** with care to ensure all the required components and information are included and formatted correctly.
- If time allows, submit an optional draft before the date stipulated in **D4. Submission Dates and Times**.
- Your institutional grant administrator, who is responsible for budgets, federal compliance, and proposal submission, should look closely at the sections **D2. Content**

and Form of Application Submission (budget and budget justification), **D3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management**, and **F. Federal Award Administration Information**.

A. Program Description

1. I have questions about the terminology found in the NOFO. Where can I find more information?

See the glossary in NEH's [General Terms and Conditions for Awards to Organizations](#) and definitions in [2 CFR § 200.1](#).

B. Award Information

1. When will we hear back on whether our application was approved?

NEH will issue notifications in December (see **E4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates** in the NOFO).

2. How will NEH review our application?

See **E2. Review and Selection Process** in the NOFO for a description of the NEH review process. For additional information on how NEH conducts application review, see https://www.neh.gov/grants/application-process.

3. Is there any flexibility in the period of performance?

No. The period of performance is up to two years for Level 1 and from two to five years for Level 2 and for Chair's Special Awards. The period of performance must start on the first day of a month (see **B2. Summary of Funding**). The fundraising period begins no earlier than five months prior to the application deadline and can include donations through the period of performance.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. How important is the format of the application (including attachments)?

Applications must follow the format outlined in the NOFO. Pay particular attention to required and recommended page limits listed under **D2. Content and Form of Application Submission**. Keep in mind that simply adding a lot of information does not necessarily make your application more compelling. NEH will automatically reject any applications that include files not saved as PDFs.

2. Our portfolio of planning and design drawings for a capital project has many pages in large formats. How should we submit them?

Make a careful selection of the line drawings and renderings of the space(s) that are relevant to the NEH-supported part of the project. Line drawings and renderings must be formatted to fit on standard letter size (8 1/2" x 11") paper format. There are no requirements for borders or specific font type or size. Remember to flatten or simplify the file to make it a readable PDF. See additional instructions in **H. Other Information** in the NOFO. A limit of ten pages is suggested.

3. We have supporting materials that are not in electronic format. How should we submit them?

You must convert them into one or more PDF files. See the instructions under "Attachments Form" in section **D2. Content and Form of Application Submission** in the NOFO for guidance on how to format your PDFs.

4. We expect to receive additional supporting materials after the deadline. Can they be added to our application?

No. You may not add anything to your application after the deadline.

5. Who should be the project director?

The project director is responsible for the programmatic aspects and day-to-day management of the proposed project. Typically, the project director is the senior institutional administrator overseeing the project, the leader of the fundraising team, or the senior manager with operational oversight of the construction activities.

6. Are we allowed to have more than one project director?

Yes. You may designate a co-project director in your application but should provide justification for such an arrangement in the narrative section on **Project and fundraising personnel**.

7. We are interested in submitting a draft for preliminary review. What should we include and how do we submit it?

Submitting a draft application is voluntary, but if you choose to submit one, it should include a narrative, preliminary workplan, and preliminary budget. You must send your draft application to challenge@neh.gov by the date specified in **D4. Submission Dates and Times** in the NOFO. NEH staff will respond within approximately two weeks of receipt of the draft.

E. Budget Advice

1. I am having a difficult time understanding the budget instructions. Whom should I contact for assistance?

Contact your institution's research development, sponsored research, or grant administration office, if available, which will likely be familiar with federal budget requirements. If they have questions about allowable costs or administrative requirements, they should contact NEH's Office of Grant Management at grantmanagement@neh.gov.

2. Some of the items on our budget can't be explained in the space available. Where can we provide additional information?

You must include a budget justification, which briefly describes the amounts requested for each line item of the budget and how each item will support the achievement of the proposed objectives. You will attach your budget justification to the Attachment Form.

3. Can we include indirect costs in the budget?

No, indirect costs are not allowable in this program.

4. When can we start fundraising the matching funds?

You may apply third-party non-federal gifts received **no earlier than five months** prior to the application deadline to fulfill matching requirements. See Administration of NEH Challenge Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grants.

5. Can we use funds set aside as savings as matching funds?

No. You cannot use your own institution's funds (savings, investments, budget allocations) as matching funds for Challenge Grants. Matching funds are defined as funds raised from non-federal third-party sources. See Administration of NEH Challenge Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grants.

6. Can we use government funds (state or local) as matching funds for a Challenge Grant?

Yes. You may use state and local government funds, provided they are non-federal and specifically designated for the proposed project. See Administration of NEH Challenge Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grants.

F. Application Review

1. What can we do to increase our chances for success?

Familiarize yourselves with the materials on the program resource page, including sample proposals and a list of recently funded projects. While preparing your proposal, carefully adhere to the instructions in the NOFO. While voluntary, NEH encourages you to submit a draft. If your application is unsuccessful, request the reviewers' comments about your proposal and incorporate their advice in a revised application. If you have specific questions about your application, contact the Office of Challenge Programs at challenge@neh.gov.

2. We applied for a grant last year and were unsuccessful. Will this be held against us if we apply again this year?

No. NEH regards all applications as new. Previous applications are considered confidential and will not be disclosed to panelists. Your current application will not be evaluated by the same panelists as your previous application. Therefore, NEH encourages you not to mention unsuccessful applications in your narrative.

G. Federal Award Administration Information

1. How involved is NEPA/Section 106 review? How long will it take?

The extent and time you will need to complete a National Environmental Policy Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act compliance review varies greatly from project to project. If NEH offers to fund your project, you may not start physical work (demolition, construction, or renovation) until NEH has completed its environmental and historic preservation compliance reviews required by NEPA and Section 106. In addition to section **F2**. in the NOFO, you can find guidance at NEH's Section 106 webpage. If you have additional questions, contact NEH's Federal Historic Preservation and Environmental Officer at hpe@neh.gov.

H. Additional Assistance

1. We have read the NOFO and this FAQ but we still have questions. Whom should we contact for answers?

You can email challenge@neh.gov with specific questions, and program staff will respond as quickly as possible. In addition, see the **Executive Summary** at the beginning of the NOFO for information on the date of a pre-application webinar.