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

Media Projects

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Updated: November 22, 2021

General information

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

Review samples of successful applications. Sample narratives from successful applications are available on the program resource page; they will give you models that can help you prepare your application.

In judging your project's fit for NEH, review the list of recent awards. Media Projects: Development Grants can be found here. A list of recent awards made by Media Projects: Production Grants can be found here.

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

What are the most common mistakes that applicants make?
Applicants often fail to provide as much information as reviewers expect. Applicants must discuss the project in considerable detail, articulating clearly their concept for the project and the humanities issues that it reflects, even when the proposal is for funding at the Development level. Media producers should have completed research on the subject and consulted with scholars about their ideas; they should also explain the scholars' contributions in the proposal. In addition, do not assume that evaluators will be aware of your previous work; instead, be sure to provide a full description of any experience that strengthens your current request.

What advice do you give media producers who have less experience but have worthy humanities projects?
Less experienced applicants frequently find it advantageous to form a partnership with a more seasoned media team.

If I am an individual producer unaffiliated with a nonprofit organization, may I

submit a Media Projects application?

No. As described in Section C1 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, 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 §200.331 for recipient responsibilities for managing and monitoring subrecipients.

Does the Media Program fund film and audio programs on international (non-United States) subjects?

Yes, the program funds films on international as well as American subjects. Documentary films that are shorter than thirty minutes must relate to "A More Perfect Union: Exploring America's Story and Commemorating its 250th Anniversary, which considers diverse topics in American history.

Does the Media Program fund individual films or series that are shorter than thirty minutes?

Yes, the program funds films of any length. Documentary films that are shorter than thirty minutes must relate to "A More Perfect Union: Exploring America's Story and Commemorating its 250th Anniversary, which considers diverse topics in American history.

In the Media Projects program, what distinguishes a Production application from a Development application?

NEH expects that Production applications will demonstrate that more research has been completed; the project should be described in greater detail. Production treatments require up to fifteen pages per hour of the proposed program. Development treatments are shorter, up to five pages. See A1 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for a description of Development and Production and D2 for specific application requirements at each funding level.

Can a Production script be shorter than fifteen pages per hour?

Yes. NEH has funded applications with shorter scripts. The length of a successful script varies, depending on the scope of the project and the writing style of the applicant. We rely on the script to provide a detailed description of what viewers will see when they watch the completed film. We understand that projects evolve during production and the completed film may not be identical to the script submitted at the time of application.

Does the Media Projects program fund resources for students and teachers?

Projects should be geared mainly for public audiences, and the budget and activities should reflect this focus. However, a Production project can include resources that help students and teachers explore the central humanities content and themes.

My organization's project is for a film that will be distributed only online. Do you support film, television, radio, and podcast projects that will be distributed only online?

Yes, but if you are planning online-only distribution of a film or radio program, you will need to make the case that it will reach a broad audience.

If you seek support for a digital project (website, game, mobile app, or other digital product) that is not related to your film, television, or radio program, you should apply to the [Digital Projects for the Public](#) program.

Submitting an application
Must I submit my application through Grants.gov?
Yes, you must submit your application through Grants.gov Workspace. See D1 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for information on accessing the application packages and D3 for information on necessary registrations.

May an applicant submit multiple proposals with the same project director at the same time?
Yes. In each application clearly explain how you would allocate your time if you were awarded more than one grant. Overlapping project costs between two or more applications for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets is not permitted. However, applicants may seek funding from other NEH programs for **complementary** aspects of the same overall project.

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

When I apply through Grants.gov, how should I submit my sample?
Include your sample as a link to a URL. You are responsible for ensuring that the link to the sample remains active and that the sample is accessible throughout the review period. See D2 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity regarding the submission of samples.

Budget
What if we are not sure where to include a line item on the Research and Related Budget?
Carefully review the instructions for preparing the Research and Related Budget in D2 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Use the budget justification to describe all activities and costs. If you have questions about categorizing costs or allowable costs, contact the Office of Grant Management at grantmanagement@neh.gov.

How should we record especially large or complex costs on the Research and Related Budget form?
Summarize the expense on the Research and Related Budget; then include a detailed explanation in your budget justification. You must include a line-item budget for the complete project in your budget justification.

If I am requesting federal matching funds, how should I include these costs in my budget?
Your budget must reflect total project costs including the one-to-one required cost share for the federal matching funds. As an example, an applicant requesting $100,000 in outright funds and $20,000 in federal matching funds must submit a budget that includes $140,000 in total project costs ($100,000 in outright funds, $20,000 in federal matching funds, and $20,000 in required cost share to unlock the federal matching funds.) Refer to the NEH Federal Matching Funds Guidelines regarding the eligibility of gifts for matching purposes. The total federal matching

funds and cost share should be equal to the amounts indicated on the Supplementary Cover Sheet for NEH Grant Programs in the "Federal Matching" and "Cost Sharing" fields.

What if the total costs for my media project exceed the amount of my projected NEH award?
You must include a line-item budget for all the costs of the complete project, in your budget justification.

May we submit a more detailed budget for the entire film or radio program in the budget justification?
Yes. If your total costs exceed the amount of your projected NEH award, you must include a line-item budget for the complete project in your budget justification.

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

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

If you are working with independent individuals that are providing expertise to the project, and they are neither employed by your organization nor within the subaward, then those individuals would be considered consultants.

How should we determine if personnel on our project should be categorized as key personnel, other personnel, consultant services, or subrecipients on the Research and Related Budget?
"Key Personnel" (R&R section A) and "Other Personnel" (R&R section B) are employed by the applicant organization.

Your project may also include key persons who not listed in this section of the budget because they are not employed by the applicant. Some personnel on Media Projects proposals who are not employed by the applicant may be classified as consultants, and listed under "Consultant Services" (R&R section F3). See 2 CFR §200.459.

Other personnel may be funded through subawards (R&R section F5), such as to a production house or a digital design firm. See 2 CFR §200.331(a).

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

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

Where should we list camera packages, audio packages, studio or editing suite

rentals, and other rental equipment expenses?
These costs should be listed under "Equipment or Facility Rental/User Fees" (R&R section F6). If you are renting multiple pieces of equipment, such as camera packages and an editing suite, list the total funds requested on the Research and Related budget and include a detailed breakdown in the budget justification. If these expenses include the cost of personnel (such as camera operators, sound operator, or editors), indicate this in your budget justification.

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

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

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

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

Funding and Distribution

If my organization receives NEH funding, may we also accept funding from other sources?

Yes. We encourage applicants to approach a range of funders, as production costs may exceed the award ceiling.

Does my organization need to have already raised money from other sources in order to be competitive for an NEH award?

No. However, NEH programmatic policy requires that commitments for full funding from all sources be in place prior to the release of NEH funds for Media Projects: Production awards.

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

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

Humanities content and advisers

What are "humanities themes"?

A theme is a brief interpretive assertion about a topic that shows the educational direction that a project will take. It identifies a topic and also suggests what audiences might learn about it. A theme incorporates the relevant humanities scholarship and offers a broad conceptual framework for understanding material. For example, "Women in the Civil War" is a topic. It describes a subject but does not reveal what the interpretive approach to it would be. On the other hand, "Women played important economic roles during the Civil War" is a theme.

How many humanities themes should we identify?

A typical application identifies three or four themes, but the number will vary depending on the scope and complexity of the project. A long list of themes in an application does not necessarily increase your chances of funding because it may be an indication that the project is not focused. Identify and develop the most relevant theme(s).

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.

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

Yes, as long as the team also includes humanities scholars.

When should we start consulting with scholars about a project?

The earlier, the better. Projects recommended for funding are usually ones in which scholars have helped shape the project's conceptual framework.

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 enables the exploration of a diverse range of scholarly perspectives.

How much should we pay scholarly advisers?
There is no set fee for advisers. Some projects pay advisers a flat honorarium, others pay a daily rate. Discuss your project with the scholars, including the work that you expect from them, and negotiate a fair rate. See [2 CFR §200.459](#). When engaging faculty members employed by the recipient institution as scholarly advisers, work with your institutional grant administrator to ensure compliance with [2 CFR §200.430](#).