

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE**

**HUMANITIES**

**ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE M-500**

**Agency Operations in the Absence of Appropriations**

**September 2023**

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES ADMINISTRATIVE  
DIRECTIVE M-500

**Agency Operations in the Absence of Appropriations**

1. PURPOSE

This directive sets forth contingency plans in the event of a funding hiatus caused by the absence of appropriations, either through failure to pass a regular appropriation bill or a continuing resolution.

2. REFERENCES AND AUTHORITIES

- A. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Bulletin 80-14, August 28, 1980
- B. OMB Bulletin 80-14, Supplement 1, August 20, 1982
- C. OMB Circular A-11: Preparation, Submission, and Execution of the Budget, August 2022, Section 124
- D. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Legal Counsel, *Government Operations in the Event of a Lapse in Appropriations*, memorandum from Walter Dellinger, Assistant Attorney General, for Alice Rivlin, Director, Office of Management and Budget, August 16, 1995
- E. 31 U.S.C. Section 1341, The Anti-Deficiency Act (prohibiting the obligation of government funds in advance of an appropriation)
- F. 31 U.S.C. Section 1342, Limitation on Voluntary Service (states that no Federal employee may accept voluntary services, unless authorized by law)
- G. 31 U.S.C. Section 1553(a), Availability of appropriation accounts to pay obligations (permits making disbursement on previously awarded contract, grant, and cooperative agreements)
- H. [December 2, 2021, Frequently Asked Questions During a Lapse in Appropriation](#)

**Lapse Plan Summary Overview**

Estimated time (to near half day) required to complete shutdown activities	0.5 days
Total number of agency employees expected to be on board before implementation of the plan	216
Total number of agency employees expected to be furloughed under the plan (unduplicated count)	208
Total number of employees to be retained under the plan for each of the following categories	8
<i>Compensation is financed by a resource other than annual appropriations</i>	-
<i>Necessary to perform activities expressly authorized by law</i>	1
<i>Necessary to perform activities necessarily implied by law</i>	5
<i>Necessary to the discharge of the President's constitutional duties and powers</i>	1

**Brief summary of significant agency activities that will continue during a lapse:**

Minimal functions will continue during a lapse of appropriations, and are related to conducting the agency's shutdown activities, providing guidance to excepted employees on personnel-related issues that may arise, maintaining the security of the network infrastructure, and communicating with OMB, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the White House as needed.

**Brief summary of significant agency activities that will cease during a lapse:**

During a shutdown, all the agency's core functions will be halted, including but not limited to application processing, application review, award issuance, award closeout staff travel, staff training, and procurement activity.

### 3. POLICIES AND RELATED PROCEDURES

A. General Policy Governing Agency Shutdown. It is the policy of NEH that in the event of a funding hiatus, the agency will proceed with the orderly shutdown of operations, beginning on the first workday of the hiatus, and will limit all work activity to actions necessary for such a shutdown unless carryover funds are available. If carryover funds are available, OMB and the Chair (or their designee) in consultation with the Director of Planning and Budget must approve the usage of carryover funds beyond the shutdown date.

It is estimated that shutdown actions will require not more than one-half workday. Since it is assumed that such a hiatus would be temporary and of short duration, no action will be taken that will impede the orderly commencement of operations once funds are available. The Chair or their designee will notify all division/office directors regarding which activities and personnel are designated as excepted and therefore exempt from the furlough, as well as the duration of each exemption.

B. Policies Governing Information Technology Systems. The agency's mission-critical information technology systems will be maintained during a shutdown so that they are available to excepted employees and so that data is not lost or damaged during the shutdown. However, after the end of the first half day of the hiatus, access to NEH's systems-whether through VPN, Outlook Web Access, or smartphones, tablets, or other mobile devices -will be disabled for non-excepted employees.

C. Policies Governing NEH's Website and Other Web Hosted Services. Public NEH websites such as [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov) and [edsitement.neh.gov](http://edsitement.neh.gov) will remain up but may be updated only as necessary. A prominent notice will be added to the main landing page of each site that reads:

Due to the unavailability of appropriated funds to continue the operations of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the agency has been shut down. Consequently, this website is not being maintained and the

information it displays may not be up to date. The Endowment will not be able to update information, process any transactions submitted via the website, or respond to any inquiries until funding for NEH is restored and the agency resumes its operations.

The online government-wide System for Award Management, Grants.gov application portal, and Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act Subaward Reporting System administered by other agencies will continue to function during a shutdown.

Access to all other automated, NEH-hosted web services, such as eGMS and eGMS Reach will remain available. A prominent notice will be added to eGMS Reach that reads:

Due to the unavailability of appropriated funds to continue the operations of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the agency has been shut down. While eGMS Reach remains functional, the Endowment will not be able to process any transactions or respond to any inquiries until funding for NEH is restored and the agency resumes its operations.

Technical support for the website, eGMS Reach and other NEH-hosted web services will be limited to those problems which are remediable by an excepted employee from the Office of Information Resources Management. There will be no helpdesk or contact support for recipients, panelists, or the public.

D. Policies and Procedures Applicable to Furloughed Employees.

(1) Annual Leave. Employees on approved annual leave will be notified that as of the completion of shutdown activities, all leave is cancelled for the duration of the shutdown period. Such employees will be furloughed for the full hiatus period and, when funds are restored, either returned to duty or placed on annual leave, as appropriate. Supervisors must make every effort to reschedule the annual leave cancelled due to a shutdown for use before the end of the current leave year, especially if such leave may be subject to forfeiture at the beginning of the subsequent leave year.

(2) Sick Leave. Employees who, at the time of the lapse of appropriations, are on approved sick leave in connection with a disabling physical condition will not be permitted to continue in sick leave status during the funding hiatus.

(3) COP Leave. Employees absent on continuation of pay (COP) leave in connection with a job-related injury at the time of the lapse of appropriations will remain in a COP status until determined to be fit for duty by a competent medical authority, or until COP leave totals 45 days if the latter is earlier. If the hiatus remains in effect when the employee is determined to be fit for duty, he/she will be placed on furlough. At the end of the maximum allowable 45 days of COP leave, if the employee remains incapacitated, he/she will be placed on leave without pay and instructed to file an application with the Department of Labor for receipt of workers'

compensation payments.

(4) Advanced Sick or Annual Leave. No advanced sick or annual leave is authorized for use during a funding hiatus. Upon a lapse of appropriations, such leave must be cancelled, and the employee furloughed.

(5) Restored Annual Leave. Employees who have use or lose annual leave should make every effort to reschedule this leave before the end of the current leave year. However, if this is not possible due to a lapse in appropriations, the Chair (or designee) may use their discretionary authority to restore any lost annual leave by determining that the employee was prevented from using his or her leave because of an exigency of the public business—namely, the need to furlough employees because of the lapse in appropriations. If approved, the restored leave will be available for usage for two leave years after it has been recredited.

(6) Leave Use. No annual or sick leave may be granted during a funding hiatus.

(7) Travel. Employees on travel status, including those on travel in connection with training or details funded by the Endowment, should be contacted by their supervisors and told that they will be furloughed. Such employees may choose to return home immediately, or, with the approval of their supervisor, they may elect to stay in place at their travel sites to continue participation in their travel-related activity. Authorization for such continued participation should rarely be granted, such as when the activity has already been paid for and there would be limited costs associated with the employee's continued participation (e.g., a funding hiatus that occurs on the fourth day of a five-day training session for which funding has already been obligated). In either case, such employees will be paid the appropriate per diem for travel to return to their duty station, whenever that return travel occurs. However, payment of salary and/or per diem will not be authorized for the furlough period except as provided for in the language of a subsequent appropriations bill.

(8) Local Training. Employees absent from the worksite in connection with training at local facilities must be advised that they will be placed on furlough for the duration of the funding hiatus. Such employees will be expected to discontinue their participation in the training session and return home immediately.

(9) Detail. Employees on non-reimbursable details to other agencies must be notified of their status and instructed to notify the appropriate officials of the agency to which detailed of their furlough status.

(10) IPA and Contract Service. Persons serving the Endowment under contract or IPA assignment agreements are technically not subject to furlough. These individuals who are in travel status at the time of the appropriations lapse may continue their assignment or return to Washington, D.C. Per diem and travel expenses will be paid for the return travel, whenever it occurs. However, per diem at the travel site for the period covered by the funding hiatus will be paid only as the language of a subsequent appropriations bill allows. Those not in a travel

status or who are returning from travel during the furlough period will be expected to continue in a work status during the furlough period, or until expiration of the contract or IPA agreement, if that is earlier. Building facilities and services, however, should not be used during the funding hiatus. All contractors and assignees will be paid in accordance with their specific agreements for the hiatus period.

(11) Telework/Remote Work Status. In the event of a government shutdown, NEH policy treats telework and remote work the same as working at the employee's regular duty station-i.e., all non-excepted employees will be furloughed, regardless of telework or remote work status.

#### 4. SHUTTING DOWN AGENCY OPERATIONS

The following actions will be taken to shut the agency down following a hiatus in funding:

- A. Employees will be advised by the Chair or their designee of a possible funding hiatus as soon as such an event is deemed likely. Supervisors will be responsible for notifying absent employees of the impending shutdown as soon as possible.
- B. All employees will be expected to report to work on the first workday of the hiatus but will only engage in actions necessary to shut down the Endowment on that day. These may include, among other things: canceling meetings, panels, and other scheduled Endowment business; answering telephones and advising callers of the pending shutdown; issuing a press release advising the general public of the shutdown; securing files, confidential materials, official work papers and documents; documenting the status of projects so that work can be resumed with the least disruption possible; recalling employees from travel and advising those on leave that they will be furloughed; recording voice-mail messages informing callers of the shutdown; posting suitable "out of office" auto-replies on employee email accounts; updating their contact information in the agency's Vital Link Notification System; and powering down printers, copiers and computer systems in their offices.

With prior supervisory approval, employees who are teleworking or working remotely may conduct their shutdown related activities virtually. Employees on prior approved leave or on their day off due to participation in an Alternate Work Schedule will not be required to report to work to perform shut down duties if they have valid telework agreements in place and communicated their intentions with their supervisors.

- C. Official files are to be secured as they would be if the agency were to be closed for a long weekend. Employees should ensure that official papers for which they are responsible are secured.
- D. Administrative processing of the payroll for the pay period will continue as

necessary to ensure that employees are paid on time for all work prior to the shutdown. Timekeepers will record time and attendance on all timecards for the current pay period through the final hour of the shutdown and transmit the authorized timecards to the National Finance Center (NFC) as usual.

- E. On the first workday of the funding hiatus, the Office of Human Resources (OHR) will email furlough letters to staff members. Every effort will be made to send an individual furlough letter to each employee; however, it should be noted that an employee can be furloughed without first receiving a written notice of a decision to furlough. If prior notice is not feasible, then any reasonable notice is permissible.
- F. Supervisors will instruct employees to limit their work activities to those functions necessary for the orderly cessation of operations. Once employees have completed their assigned shutdown tasks and received a furlough notice, they will be asked to leave the worksite or log off their computers. It is expected that most employees will be furloughed prior to noon. Employees will be advised to listen to the news media for word of a recall from furlough. Any such news will also be conveyed to staff via the Endowment's Emergency Vital Link Notification System or OPM's status app.
- G. As office shutdown functions are completed and employees furloughed, the immediate supervisor will notify the office director that all shutdown activities have been completed and all employees have been furloughed. All remaining employees, except the Chair (who by law cannot be furloughed) and any employees designated as excepted under the pertinent guidelines, will be furloughed before the end of the day.
- H. On the day the agency is shut down, responses to telephone and email inquiries to the Endowment will be limited to explaining the funding hiatus.
- I. With advance approval of the Senior Deputy Chair, or the Assistant Chair for Planning and Operations in the absence of the Senior Deputy Chair, panel and project directors' meetings scheduled for the first day of the hiatus may be held as scheduled. The requests to hold both panel and project directors' meeting should originate with the Division/Office Directors. Any staff members who are required to work in support of such meetings will be granted "excepted" status for that day. To the extent any new obligations of funds are needed in support of meetings held on the first day of a hiatus, such obligations will be made using existing surpluses of previously appropriated funds. The status of meetings scheduled after the first day of the funding hiatus will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Senior Deputy Chair, or the Assistant Chair for Planning and Operations in the absence of the Senior Deputy Chair.
- J. All payments scheduled to be paid during the furlough periods that were authorized under prior obligations, e.g., travel and per diem, contract payments, IPA supplemental salary, or per diem, will be delayed until the furlough period is

ended.

- K. The director of the Administrative Services Office (ASO) will be responsible for notifying all appropriate General Services Administration, Kastle Systems, GS4 Security Force and other parties, of the agency shutdown to ensure continuity of security services. Similarly, this individual will be responsible for notifying all contract vendors who are scheduled to execute the terms of a contract during the anticipated hiatus period of the lapse of appropriations. Expenses incurred due to necessary cancellations will be paid when funds are restored.
- L. As noted previously, it is expected that the agency closedown will be completed by noon of the first workday of the hiatus. Division and office directors will take such actions necessary to ensure orderly accomplishment of this goal. Offices that will require additional time to accomplish the closedown will notify the director of ASO as soon as the need for such additional time becomes apparent.

## 5. STATUS OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

- A. Unemployment Compensation Benefits. Furloughed employees are not eligible for unemployment compensation benefits for any week in which salary exceeds the maximum unemployment compensation payable. Therefore, employees who wish to apply for unemployment compensation should file a claim with the District of Columbia Unemployment Compensation Board during the first week in which salary does not exceed the maximum unemployment compensation benefit. The first week in which a claim is filed is considered a waiting period and no unemployment compensation will be paid for that week. Unemployment compensation payments will commence at the beginning of the week after the one in which an eligible claim is filed. The information and employment certification necessary to file unemployment compensation claims will be furnished to all furloughed employees by the OHR as an attachment to the notice of furlough.
- B. Health Benefits Costs. Federal regulations require all employees enrolled for coverage under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) to pay the employee's share of the premium cost for the elected coverage for each pay period during which enrolled, whether in a pay or non-pay status. Therefore, enrolled employees will incur an indebtedness to the federal government equal to the amount of the employee contribution for health benefits for each pay period in which no deductions are made. Once an employee is returned to a pay status, the delinquent amount will be automatically deducted from the bi-weekly gross pay, in addition to other authorized deductions, until the indebtedness is liquidated.
- C. Leave Accrual. For leave accrual purposes, the effect of the furlough



period for covered employees will be as described below:

(1) Full-Time Employees

a. Under current leave regulations no sick or annual leave accrual will be credited for any pay period during the leave year in which an employee accumulates 80 hours in a non-pay status. Therefore, the regular leave accrual will be credited to all employees for each pay period during part of which the employee is in a pay status, unless the furlough time or the combined furlough time and previously accumulated Leave Without Pay equals or exceeds 80 hours.

b. In addition, no leave will be earned or credited for any pay period during which an employee is in a non-pay status for the full pay period. If furloughed employees are returned to duty for a partial pay period following a pay period in which they were in a non-pay status for the entire pay period, leave accrual will be pro-rated based on the number of days in a pay status as follows:

PRORATA TABLE

Biweekly Pay Period	Hourly accrual rate		
	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Workdays</u>			
1	1	1	1
2	1	1	2
3	1	2	2
4	2	2	3
5	2	3	4
6	2	4	5
7	3	4	6
8	3	5	6
9	3	5	7
10	4	6	8

NOTE: Use hourly accrual rate for category 4 for sick leave accrual.

(2) Part-Time Employees

Part-time employees will continue to be credited with leave based on the number of hours in a pay status.

D. Retirement and Life Insurance

For most employees these two benefits remain unaffected by the furlough. However, employees for whom the furlough period, when added to previously accumulated leave without pay, will cause the total non-pay time to exceed six months in the current calendar year or twelve consecutive months, should contact the OHR for additional information.

The OHR will notify the appropriate finance centers of the furlough actions on employees receiving military retirement or retainer pay.

## 6. BACKPAY

In the event furloughed employees are awarded backpay in the funding legislation, all employees will be paid as if they worked the entire duration of the shutdown. This includes employees on intermittent or part-time schedules who will be paid for hours that they would have “normally” worked had the furlough not occurred.

## 7. RESUMING AGENCY OPERATIONS

The following actions will be taken to resume agency operations after an appropriation is restored to the NEH:

- A. It is the employee's responsibility to stay informed as to the status of agency funding during the hiatus. Employees are expected to report to work as scheduled on the first workday after the enactment of an appropriation or continuing resolution that makes funds available to the agency. Notification will be made through the Emergency Vital Link Notification System or OPM's website.
- B. Employees who are not able to report to work as scheduled on the first workday after funding has been restored must work with their immediate supervisor or office director to use leave or a workplace flexibility, including use of annual leave, compensatory time off, or credit hours, or situational telework.
- C. When the funding hiatus ends and employees are recalled from furlough, the OHR will document all furlough periods with a "Notification of Personnel Action" (Standard Form 50) as directed by the National NFC.
- D. OHR will provide instructions to agency employees on completion of timecards for the days during the funding lapse. Employees will complete their timecards by the deadline set by OHR to meet NFC processing timelines for orderly and efficient payment of back pay.
- E. Notices on the NEH website, the EDSITEment page, and in eGMS Reach will be removed. Employees will turn off out of office notifications on their email and telephones.
- F. The Office of Planning and Budget and the Accounting Office will work together to

complete required financial paperwork and transactions, including fund allocations, financial reporting, and payment of invoices and grant awards.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shelly C. Lowe', with a stylized, cursive script.

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Shelly C. Lowe  
Chair

ADM-500  
Updated as of September 2023

## APPENDIX

### Personnel Considerations During a Funding Hiatus

Current number of NEH staff, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and intermittent employees: 216

Number of staff to be designated as "excepted" during a shutdown: 8

Identity of excepted employees and reasons for their designation as such:

1. Chair: Exempt from furlough by statute.
2. Senior Deputy Chair: To provide advice and guidance to the Chair and excepted staff on policies and procedures related to the shutdown as they affect agency operations. Additionally, the Senior Deputy Chair will coordinate the agency's shutdown related activities and serve as an ongoing liaison with OMB for the duration of the shutdown period. In the absence of the Senior Deputy Chair, the Assistant Chair for Planning and Operations will fulfill these responsibilities.
3. Chief of Staff: To facilitate communications with the White House and Congress and to coordinate NEH's response to any such communications, including communications needed by implication regarding NEH employees' safety and security, protection of property, and the orderly shutdown of operations and unfunded activities. In the absence of a Chief of Staff during a furlough period, the Director of Congressional Affairs will instead be designated as an excepted employee to serve in this capacity.
4. Assistant Chair for Planning and Operations: To coordinate the agency's shutdown related activities and to assist with the ongoing liaison with OMB for the duration of the shutdown period. In the absence of an Assistant Chair for Planning and Operations during a furlough period, the Assistant Chair for Programs will instead be designated as an excepted employee to serve in this capacity.
5. Director, Office of Administrative Services: To provide all needed administrative support for the suspension of operations and the orderly phase down of non-funded activities, which are needed by implication. In addition, this position serves as liaison with the General Services Administration and the Department of Homeland Security on matters related to building access and operations, which are necessary to protect Government property.
6. Director, Office of Human Resources: To coordinate all communications with furloughed staff and to provide advice and guidance to excepted employees on personnel-related issues that might arise during a shutdown. Participates in all teleconferences with OMB and OPM and takes appropriate action and/or disseminates information accordingly.

7. Systems Operations Supervisor, Office of Information Resources Management: To maintain a secure and viable IT infrastructure for excepted employees and to oversee the physical security and soundness of our network infrastructure. This employee is excepted for the protection of property consisting of IT systems and computer data.
8. General Counsel: To provide legal counsel to the Chair (or designee) and agency leadership on a host of issues that may arise as a result of the furlough. This includes work that is necessary by implication to inform and advise on the suspension of operations and the orderly phase down of non-funded activities.
9. The Assistant Chair for Programs, the Director of Accounting, the Director of Grant Management, and the Director for Planning and Budget may be excepted on an ad hoc basis to process payments and provide guidance.

**Note:** The Chair (or designee) may authorize any senior official to modify the designation of excepted employees as necessary to accommodate unforeseen circumstances. In addition, the Inspector General, as head of the independent Office of the Inspector General within the Agency, has determined that the Inspector General shall be excepted from furlough.