NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

Public Humanities Projects

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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1. 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. More than a topic, a theme considers 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. It identifies a topic and also suggests what audiences might learn about it.

How much should we pay scholarly advisers?

There is no set fee for scholars and other professionals working on your project. Some projects pay scholars 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. Also see [2 CFR §200.459 Professional service costs](#).

2. General information about Public Humanities Projects (PHP)

How do I know whether my organization's project is more appropriate for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) or the National Endowment for the Humanities?

If your project involves the creation of musical compositions, dance, painting, poetry, short stories, novels, or if it focuses on arts performance or training, you should apply to NEA. NEH supports projects that provide an analytical, reflective, or historical perspective on the arts.

If our organization is implementing a museum exhibition that will be accompanied by a website and a short film based on the exhibition, should we apply only to PHP or should we submit multiple applications to different NEH programs?

Many PHP projects include multiple formats. Applicants must determine the primary format for which they are requesting support and apply to the NEH program most appropriate for that format. Applicants may want to consider how they will use grant funds and staff resources in determining the primary format.

In this case, the exhibition is the primary grant product. The other components enhance and broaden the exhibition content. You should probably apply to PHP and follow the PHP Notice of Funding Opportunity for describing the exhibition and related components.

What if we want funding only for a single format, such as a museum exhibition?

Projects with a single format are still welcome and will be judged on their own merits.

Must our organization apply for a Planning grant before we apply for an Implementation grant?

No. Organizations may apply for the type of grant that is appropriate for the developmental stage of their project. Although many applicants find it beneficial to obtain planning funds before applying for implementation, it is not required.

To which program should our organization apply if we want to produce a media project?

If you are planning to produce a radio program, film, television series, or podcast for broad regional or national distribution over broadcast media, the most appropriate program is Media Projects.

What are the most common mistakes that applicants make?

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

What are the Positions in Public Humanities, and how are they related to PHP?

Implementation applicants in the Exhibitions and Historic Places categories are eligible to apply for support of Positions in Public Humanities, but Planning and Humanities Discussions applicants are not. Implementation applicants may request an additional $50,000 (for projects with a one-year period of performance) or $100,000 (for projects with a two- or three-year period of performance), to support the hiring of a recent graduate of a public humanities MA or PhD program or a recent graduate of a humanities PhD program, whose expertise would be critical to the success of the larger project. The individual must have graduated in the last five

years, and they must be a U.S. citizen or a foreign national who has been living in the US or its jurisdiction for at least three years prior to the PHP application deadline. The $50,000 would be used to support a one-year entry-level position. The $100,000 would be used to support a two-year entry-level position. The candidate selected to fill the position would be expected to strengthen the interpretive and public aspects of the PHP project by incorporating fresh ideas and perspectives. More information is available in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Does this program fund resources for students and teachers?

Projects should be geared mainly for public audiences, and the project budget and activities should reflect this focus on producing programs for general public audiences. However, an Implementation project can include resources that help students and teachers explore the humanities content and themes central to the project. Such resources might include classroom-specific hands-on activities, lesson plans, scholarly essays, maps, and/or timelines. Projects intended primarily for students in formal learning environments are not allowed in this program.

Are program officers available through phone or e-mail to answer questions?

Yes. Applicants are encouraged to contact us to discuss applications prior to their submission. We are also happy to look at drafts of proposals submitted by the dates in section D4 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, and to share samples of previously funded projects. The staff can be reached at 202-606-8269 or publicpgms@neh.gov.

May a non-U.S. institution or organization apply for an NEH award?

No, foreign entities are not eligible to apply. NEH does not provide financial assistance to foreign institutions or organizations. Nevertheless, otherwise eligible American institutions may apply for collaborative projects involving U.S. and foreign organizations provided they do not use NEH funds for the purpose of issuing subawards to any foreign organization, as defined by 2 CFR §200.92 and 2 CFR §200.330(a). This limitation does not preclude American institutions from obtaining the services of foreign individuals and consultants to carry out various programmatic activities on a fee-for-service basis, as specified in 2 CFR §200.459; it also does not preclude vendor contracts such as in-country transportation services. If you are interested in submitting an application for a project involving international collaboration, please consult beforehand with the division staff.

If I am an individual scholar, community member, or curator unaffiliated with a nonprofit organization, may I apply for a Public Humanities Projects grant?

No, individuals are not eligible to apply.

Nevertheless, many cultural organizations, arts centers, and universities may be willing to partner with you and participate in your proposed project. The partnering organization is responsible for submitting the application to NEH. If the application is funded, the partnering organization is the recipient of record and assumes all programmatic, financial, and legal responsibilities of the award. The partnering organization may not function solely as a fiscal agent.

3. Submitting an application

Must our organization submit our application through Grants.gov?

You must apply electronically, using either [Grants.gov Workspace](#) or your organization's system-to-system software.

May our organization submit an application for two different projects 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.

May unsuccessful applicants resubmit their proposals?

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

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. All financial reports and prior approval requests such as budget revisions, extensions of the period of performance, and changes in key personnel must be signed or countersigned by the institutional grant administrator. Similarly, official correspondence from NEH to a recipient (for example, an offer letter, the award document, an extension, a supplement or amendment) is addressed to the institutional grant administrator and copied to the project director. The project director is the person directly in charge of the conduct of the funded project. Because the project director's involvement in the project is normally critical to its success, the replacement of the project director or the co-director or a substantial reduction in the level of their effort (for example, an unanticipated absence for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in the time devoted to the project) requires prior written approval from NEH.

4. Federal award information

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

Yes. We encourage applicants to approach a range of funders. Applicants may use voluntary cost sharing for projects in which the total costs exceed the amount awarded by NEH. As a reminder, your application budget may not include overlapping costs with any pending or current federal awards.

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

No.

What are the differences between outright funds and matching funds? What is cost sharing?

Outright funds are awarded on a non-matching basis. They are not contingent on additional fund-raising.

Matching funds require a recipient to obtain nonfederal gift funds from third parties before the matching funds are released.

Learn more about different types of grant funding.

Cost sharing or matching is the portion of the project costs not paid by NEH funds.

Required cost sharing consists of third-party nonfederal cash contributions used to release federal matching funds.

Applicants may use voluntary cost sharing for projects in which the total costs exceed the amount awarded by NEH. Voluntary cost sharing includes cash contributions to a project by the applicant and nonfederal third parties, as well as in-kind contributions, such as donated goods and services and unrecovered indirect costs. Although cost sharing is not required, the program is rarely able to support the full costs of projects approved for funding.