



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

OFFICE OF CHALLENGE GRANTS

**INFRASTRUCTURE AND
CAPACITY BUILDING
CHALLENGE GRANTS**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

May my institution apply for more than one challenge grant at a time?

No. An institution may submit only one NEH challenge grant application under this announcement. An institution may not hold multiple NEH challenge grants concurrently.

My institution was awarded a challenge grant last year. May we apply this year?

No. An institution may receive only one NEH challenge grant at a time. An institution is eligible to apply for a subsequent challenge grant beginning in the third year after submission of the final financial report on its most recent NEH challenge grant. For example, if a grant closed in 2017, the institution that received the grant would not be able to apply for a subsequent challenge grant until 2020. Institutional recipients of Next Generation Challenge Grants, Humanities Access Grants, and Creating Humanities Communities grants are exempt from this requirement.

What is the matching requirement for a challenge grant?

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions of higher education, and two-year colleges must raise only **one** nonfederal dollar from third parties for every federal dollar offered. Other institutions must raise **three** nonfederal dollars from third parties for every federal dollar offered for grants of \$500,000 or less, or **four** nonfederal dollars from third parties for every federal dollar offered for grants of more than \$500,000.

I'd like to send a draft proposal for NEH staff comment. How do I do that?

While it is not mandatory to submit a draft, you are strongly encouraged to do so no later than six weeks before the application deadline. Time constraints may prevent staff from reviewing draft proposals submitted after that date. Staff comments on draft proposals are not part of the formal review process and have no bearing on the final outcome of the application, but previous applicants have found them helpful in strengthening their proposals. Staff review of a draft can

substantially improve a proposal: staff members can draw on their extensive experience to identify technical problems with a planned challenge grant and to offer advice for improving a narrative.

Submit draft proposals by e-mail attachment to challenge@neh.gov.

Should my institution include letters of commitment and support as part of its application or should they be sent separately?

You should include letters of commitment and support with the application as Attachment 9 to the Grants.gov application.

Are in-kind donations permitted for matching an NEH Challenge Grant?

Yes, subject to the limitation that the total of such donations—combined with earned income and unrestricted gifts—may not exceed the federal portion of the grant (normally 25 percent of the total grant). Furthermore, in-kind gifts or donated services are eligible only if the material or service provided is allocable to the humanities activities being supported. For further information, see the [Administration of NEH Challenge Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grants](#) booklet.

Are unrestricted gifts to my organization allowable for match?

Yes, subject to two limitations: 1) the total of unrestricted donations—combined with earned income and in-kind donations—may not exceed the federal portion of the grant (normally 25 percent of the total grant); and 2) like restricted gifts, unrestricted challenge gifts must be donated during the grant period. For further information, see the [Administration of NEH Challenge Infrastructure and Capacity Building Grants](#) booklet.

What is the period of performance for a challenge grant, and how does it relate to the fundraising period during which gift funds required to meet the match may be secured?

HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions of higher education, and two-year community colleges may request a period of performance of up to six years for capital improvement projects (May 1, 2020 through April 30, 2026) and up to ten years for activities supported through the earnings of a short-term endowment (May 1, 2020 through April 30, 2030). Other eligible entities may request a period of performance of up to five years for capital improvement projects (May 1, 2020 through April 30, 2025) and ten years for activities supported through the earnings of a short-term endowment (May 1, 2020 through April 30, 2030). All costs charged to the award must be incurred during the period of performance. Funding beyond the first year is dependent on the availability of appropriated funds in subsequent fiscal years, satisfactory recipient performance, and a decision that continued funding is in the best interest of the federal government.

The fundraising period for all challenge grants begins five months before the application deadline and runs through the period of performance. Thus the fundraising period for applications for regular challenge grants submitted at the May 2019 deadline begins December 15, 2018, and ends April 30, 2025. The fundraising period for grants to HBCUs, Tribal Colleges

and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions of higher education, and two-year community colleges begins December 15, 2018 and ends April 30, 2026.

What constitutes a good title for my project?

Your title should be brief (not exceeding 125 characters, including spaces and punctuation) and descriptive of the project. It should also be free of specialized language that might not be understood by the general public.

Avoid using a main title that requires clarification by the subtitle. For example, “A History of Counterfeiting in the U.S., 1776-1900” is clearer than “Fakes and Fakers: A History of Counterfeiting in the U.S., 1776-1990.”

Use words and phrases that are informative and specific rather than puzzling or intriguing. For example, “A Cultural History of the Telephone and Telecommunications in America, 1950-2015” is clearer than “Ten Digits and a Party Line: A Study of a Number and a Nation.”

NEH reserves the right to re-title funded projects that do not follow agency guidelines. Award recipients, however, are permitted to use their preferred title for any award products.

The application instructions include a financial summary form. May I submit a copy of my institution’s audited financial statements instead of using the financial summary form?

No. Full audited accounts or reports are not useful for the program’s purpose. Rather than sending the full records, you should instead extract and submit information of the kind that the summary form requests. On the other hand, the financial summary form is a suggested format only. You may create your own form or use an existing institutional form, so long as it provides the same kind of information about the applicant institution’s finances: that is, a *summary* snapshot of income and expenditures over the last three years.

We are preparing to submit an application for a construction and renovation project. Should we contact our State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO)?

No, you do not need to contact your SHPO or THPO about the proposed project. Your application must, however, include the following materials relevant to NEH’s review of the application in terms of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act:

1. A written description of the project, including the proposed use(s) for the property and the scope of the proposed construction, renovation, repair, rehabilitation, ground, or visual disturbance;
2. A map, photograph, or drawing clearly demarcating the project’s Area of Potential Effects (APE). The APE is the geographic area(s) within which a project may directly or indirectly affect historic properties. To determine the APE, applicants should consider all locations where the project may result in ground, visible, or audible disturbances, or changes in public access, traffic patterns, or land use;

3. Descriptions of all known properties in the APE that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register, and descriptions and evaluations of all other properties in the APE (regardless of age) to determine their eligibility for the National Register when the National Register criteria are taken into account.

If you have already completed the Section 106 process, please include the requested documents as well the documentation you received from the SHPO or THPO regarding the determination as to the effects of the project. If NEH offers your institution a challenge grant, NEH will conduct a Section 106 review, which will include the SHPO's final determination. ***NEH cannot release federal funds until the Section 106 review is completed. This process may take several months to complete.***

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.

When will I hear whether my institution will be offered a challenge grant?

Approximately seven months after the application deadline.