NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

OFFICE OF **DIGITAL HUMANITIES**

DIGITAL HUMANITIES ADVANCEMENT GRANTS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Digital Humanities Advancement Grants program?

In 2016 NEH combined the former Digital Humanities Start-Up Grants and Digital Humanities Implementation Grants programs into the Digital Humanities Advancement Grants program. The program supports digital projects throughout their lifecycles, from early start-up phases through implementation and sustainability. Experimentation, reuse, and extensibility are hallmarks of this grant category, leading to innovative work that can scale to enhance research, teaching, and public programming in the humanities.

What do you mean by experimentation or innovation?

An experimental project creates something new, offering an interesting new approach to tackling a problem. Experimentation can take many forms. Some projects are examples of technical innovation, such as the creation of a new piece of software to address a need in the humanities. In other cases, the experimentation does not consist of creating new technology; instead the project makes use of an existing technology in a new way. For example, an applicant might take existing software used for some other purpose and demonstrate how it could be effectively used for humanities research. In still other cases, the experimentation does not pertain to the technology per se; instead it is the project collaboration that is experimental, as with projects that bring together creative individuals from both technical and nontechnical fields to address a longstanding humanities issue in a new way.

Do Digital Humanities Advancement Grants support projects that study digital culture, in addition to projects that use digital techniques to study traditional humanities materials?

Yes.

What constitutes "planning for the revitalization and/or recovery of existing digital projects"?

Level I Digital Humanities Advancement Grants support planning for the restarting of projects that are valuable but have languished (and thus need substantive changes in their design,

technical architecture, and dissemination and preservation strategies). Digital Humanities Advancement Grants do not, however, support regular, ongoing maintenance of existing projects. Activities that can be supported include

- the testing and evaluation of an established project with target audiences to determine needs and priorities;

- the planning for a redesign of a project's interface to align with current web design standards, including those that address accessibility for audiences with disabilities;

- the testing of widely used digital tools (for example, tools used for annotation or visualization) to see if they can be successfully integrated into an established project;

- the consideration of how the project data can be incorporated into a federated or discipline-specific platform such as the Digital Public Library of America, Open Context, etc.; and

- the creation or revision of a plan to manage an established project's data—including digitized images, scholarly essays, annotations, social media, etc.—in the long term. The plan should include a strategy for archiving and sharing data, even if the project is no longer being updated regularly.

My organization is interested in applying for Level III funding for a project involving a museum or a library, but I see that the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is partnering with NEH to support only Level I or Level II applications to the DHAG program. Can I still apply for a Level III grant?

Yes. Although IMLS is currently joining with NEH to support only smaller (Level I and II) grants, NEH has a long history of support for projects involving museums and libraries; it welcomes applications for such projects for all levels of funding. You may also wish to consider other IMLS opportunities, such as National Leadership Grants for Museums and National Leadership Grants for Libraries.

As a reminder, overlapping project costs between two or more applications for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets is not permitted.

The project that I have in mind seems compatible with the guidelines for another NEH program, but it also seems to fit as a Digital Humanities Advancement Grant. To which program should I apply?

Generally, projects that can be supported through other NEH programs and that seek to achieve the goals of the other programs should be addressed to those programs. However, no rules prevent an applicant from submitting an application to more than one NEH program, so long as the application is appropriately modified to fit the guidelines of the different programs. (Overlapping project costs between two or more applications for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets is not permitted.) If you are not certain to which program you should apply, contact NEH program staff for guidance.

ELIGIBILITY

I am an independent scholar. Am I eligible to apply for a Digital Humanities Advancement Grant as an individual?

No. Individuals are not eligible to apply for Digital Humanities Advancement Grants. Only eligible institutions may submit applications.

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. 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; 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.

May my institution apply for more than one Digital Humanities Advancement Grant at a time?

Yes. Institutions may apply for and hold more than one of these awards. However, individuals may serve as project directors or co-directors for only one application to this program per deadline.

I received funds for the start-up phase of my project from a source other than the NEH. Am I still eligible to apply for a Level III Digital Humanities Advancement Grant?

Yes. You are welcome to apply to the program whether or not you previously received a Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant (SUG), a DHAG, or another NEH award. However, you must be able to demonstrate that you and your collaborators have completed the start-up phase and are prepared to move on to implementation.

I currently have a DHAG award. I would like to apply for a Level III Digital Humanities Advancement Grant as a follow-up to this award. However, at the time of the DHAG deadline, my other award won't yet be fully completed. May I still apply?

We actively encourage NEH project directors to apply for a DHAG, even if the project director's other DHAG award is not fully completed when he or she applies for a subsequent DHAG award. Nevertheless, evidence of the success of a project's start-up phase is an important consideration when Level III DHAG proposals are reviewed. You should demonstrate that you have made

enough progress in the start-up phase of your project to be ready to apply for an additional DHAG.

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.

BUDGET

May the project budget include funds to support activities described in the data management and sustainability plans?

Yes. The budget may include funds for staff and other costs incurred within the period of performance related to preserving, disseminating, and sustaining the digital materials created under the award.

Sustainability plans are required of all Level III applications.

Examples of data management plans from previously-funded Digital Humanities Advancement Grants may be found in the sample applications available on the program resource page.

What are indirect costs?

Indirect costs (also known as "facilities and administrative" or F & A costs) are those costs that are not readily identified with a specific project or organizational activity. "Facilities" is defined as depreciation on buildings, equipment and capital improvement, interest on debt associated with certain buildings, equipment and capital improvements, and operations and maintenance expenses. "Administration" is defined as general administration and general expenses such as the director's office, accounting, personnel and all other types of expenditures not listed specifically under one of the subcategories of "Facilities" (including cross allocations from other pools, where applicable).

An indirect-cost rate is simply a device for determining the proportion of general (indirect) expenses that each federally funded project may include as part of its overall budget request. Indirect costs are computed by applying a negotiated indirect-cost rate to a distribution base.

For administrative convenience, applicant organizations negotiate rates with a single federal agency (referred to as the "cognizant agency"), and then the organization can use that negotiated rate in any of their federal applications.

Governmental departments or agency units receiving more than $35M in federal funds from all sources during a given fiscal year must have a federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement. Any other applicant organization that has never had a negotiated indirect-cost rate may use the de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC). If chosen, this method must be used consistently for all federal awards until the organization chooses to negotiate a rate. This can be done at any time. See 2 CFR §200.414 for additional information.

For applicants seeking reimbursement for indirect costs: Please review carefully your institution's negotiated indirect-cost rate(s) to make sure you are using the most appropriate rate in your application budget. Many institutions negotiate multiple rates—for example, "Research," "Instruction," and "Other Sponsored Activities." With rare exceptions, your institution's "Research" rate will not be the appropriate rate for inclusion in your NEH project budget, as the use of this rate is reserved for projects involving scientific research, not scholarly inquiry of the type most often supported by NEH.

Does NEH limit the amount of indirect costs that can be included as part of an application for a Digital Humanities Advancement Grant?

No. An institution may include indirect costs up to the appropriate negotiated rate in the application budget. Note, though, that the indirect costs are included in the amount awarded for the grant; they are not added to the grant amount. (For example, if an applicant requests $325,000, this means that NEH would support no more than $325,000 of a project's costs, including the indirect as well as the direct project costs.)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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.

Should the application include letters of commitment from outside participants and cooperating institutions, or should such letters be sent separately?

Letters of commitment should be included with the application as Attachment 7.

Whom should I ask to provide letters of support?

Letters of support should come from persons who can objectively assess the importance of the project to the humanities. These persons should comment on the importance of the project's subject area, the proposed methodologies, the technical plan, or the potential audience for the project. They should not be project participants. Also, the letters should be sent to the project director (not separately to NEH) and submitted with the application.

I would like to include a works cited page or bibliography in my application. Where should I insert this?

Please include this component in the appendices section of the application (Attachment 6).

On the Supplementary Cover Sheet for NEH Grant Programs, question number 1 asks for the project director's major field of study. Our project director's field of study is not, however, listed in the drop-down menu. What should we choose?

If none of the listed fields seems to fit your project director's major field of study, please choose "Interdisciplinary."

REVIEW PROCESS

Who will read my grant application?

A variety of individuals will read your application, including peer reviewers, NEH staff, and members of the NEH National Council on the Humanities.

We therefore strongly emphasize that you should write your application so that readers without technical knowledge can understand it. We realize that your project may be technical in nature and that part of the application may have to address complex technological issues. But particularly in your one-paragraph description of the project on the SF-424 Short Organizational form and the first portion of your narrative, you should write for a general audience that is familiar with the humanities but may have no specific knowledge of technology or of your project's relation to the humanities. In these sections of the application you should make a "big picture" case for your project's contribution to the humanities.

Your proposal must explain the significance of your project to the humanities, in terms that will be comprehensible to readers without technical knowledge. Your application will be read by many individuals with different backgrounds, from different disciplines, with varying degrees of familiarity with the methodologies used in digital scholarship. You must therefore make a case to this broad audience. Consider, for example, how you might make a case for your project if you were describing it to your provost, dean, college president, board chair, or a new acquaintance. Alternatively, consider how you might briefly describe the project to a new acquaintance outside

your field. Your project description and the first portion of your narrative should be crafted to appeal to individuals like these.

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

While submitting a draft is not mandatory, applicants are encouraged to do so. In order to guarantee NEH review of the draft, it should reach NEH six weeks before the deadline. Draft proposals should be submitted via e-mail to odh@neh.gov.

My previous application to this program was unsuccessful. Is there anything I may do to increase my chances for success next time?

You may request copies of the comments by reviewers. A revised application should take into consideration the issues that they raised. However, a resubmitted application will be reviewed by persons who will not have knowledge of or access to the previous application file.

ACCESSIBILITY

Where can I find resources with additional information about developing accessibility plans for my project?

The following resources may be useful in developing plans to ensure that grant products are accessible to a broad audience, including individuals with disabilities:

"Considering the User Perspective: A Summary of Design Issues," WebAIM
http://webaim.org/articles/userperspective/

"Design For Accessibility: A Cultural Administrator's Handbook" (PDF)
https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Design-for-Accessibility.pdf

"How People with Disabilities Use the Web," Web Accessibility Initiative
http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/people-use-web/

United States Access Board
https://www.access-board.gov/
W3C Accessibility Standards
http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility