



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

HUMANITIES INITIATIVES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the humanities?

According to the 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, “The term ‘humanities’ includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.”

My project is related to the arts. How do I know whether my project is more appropriate for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) or the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)?

If your project involves the creation of musical compositions, dance, painting, poetry, short stories, novels, or arts performance or training, then NEA would be the more appropriate choice for your application. NEH supports projects that provide scholarly, analytical, or historical perspectives on the arts.

What first steps should I take in developing an NEH Humanities Initiatives grant proposal?

First, read the program guidelines carefully, including the eligibility requirements. Be sure to read the review criteria by which your application will be judged (in Section II of the guidelines). You may wish to discuss your proposal with colleagues or consult with a grants officer at your institution, if one is available. After this preparation, contact an NEH program officer for answers to questions, advice on the proposal, and review of draft proposals. The submission of a draft is optional; if you wish to submit a draft, consult the application guidelines for the deadline. Call 202-606-2324 or e-mail hi@neh.gov to reach NEH staff. E-mail hi@neh.gov to submit a draft proposal.

To be eligible, must my institution's project have some connection to the identity of my institution as a Historically Black College or University, Hispanic-Serving Institution, or Tribal College or University?

No. Projects addressing any topic within the humanities (or the social sciences employing humanistic methods) are eligible, except for those projects disallowed in Section I of the guidelines ("Program Description"). Proposing a topic connected to the identity of your institution will neither improve nor lessen your chances of receiving an award.

Are sample proposals available?

Yes. The sample proposals are available on the program resource pages for the four Humanities Initiatives programs: [Humanities Initiatives at Community Colleges](#), [Humanities Initiatives at Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#), [Humanities Initiatives at Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#), and [Humanities Initiatives at Tribal Colleges and Universities](#).

Does my institution need a grant writer to prepare an application?

No. NEH staff members are available to answer your questions and assist you as you prepare your proposal. Please contact us at hi@neh.gov.

Another institution has resources or faculty that would enhance my project. May we collaborate?

Yes, we encourage collaborative projects. The applicant institution must, however, be an eligible applicant for the relevant Humanities Initiatives program: a community college, a Hispanic-serving institution, a Historically Black College or University, or a Tribal College or University.

When should I start consulting with scholars about a project?

As a rule, the earlier that scholars are involved in a project, the better. Usually projects that receive grants have benefited from an extensive dialogue among faculty at the applicant institution and with consulting scholars from other institutions.

May I apply for more than one NEH award at the same time?

Yes. There are, however, certain restrictions. Applicants interested in applying for more than one award should consult with a program officer.

I just found out that my institution will submit an application for another Humanities Initiatives project. Will NEH fund only one?

Each application is evaluated on its own merits. NEH might fund both applications, one, or neither. As a reminder, overlapping project costs between two or more applications for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets is not permitted.

My institution applied for an award last year and was unsuccessful. Will this be held against us if we apply again this year?

No. NEH evaluates all applications as new applications.

My previous application for an NEH Humanities Initiatives award was unsuccessful. Is there anything I may do to increase my chances for success this time?

If you are revising a previous submission, you may find it helpful to request the reviewers' comments on that application and to consult with an NEH program officer. To see the reviewers' comments, send an e-mail message to hi@neh.gov.

May we continue the work of a currently funded project with a subsequent NEH Humanities Initiatives award?

It is possible, but no NEH program, including NEH Humanities Initiatives, guarantees funding beyond the current award. If you submit a new application that builds on the work of a previous grant, in the new application you must demonstrate successful completion of the earlier project.

May I propose a project that would teach, for example, introductory Italian grammar and vocabulary?

No. NEH supports the study of foreign cultures (which may be conducted in a language other than English), but not the teaching of basic foreign-language skills.

May I incorporate a study-abroad program for students into a Humanities Initiatives proposal focused on foreign cultures?

No. Successful Humanities Initiatives projects that focus on foreign cultures emphasize faculty development. NEH does not support work undertaken in the pursuit of an academic degree.

What constitutes a good title for my project?

Your title should be brief (not exceeding 125 characters, including spaces and punctuation), descriptive of the project, and 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, "Chaucer's Canterbury Tales" is clearer than "Following the Pilgrims: Chaucer's Canterbury Tales."

Do not use the name of your institution or the name of the grant program to which you are applying in your title. For example, "Developing an Interdisciplinary Environmental Humanities Minor" is clearer than "George Washington University Humanities Initiatives Project."

Use words and phrases that are informative and specific rather than puzzling or intriguing. For example, "The Civil Rights Movement in the United States, 1954-1968" is clearer than "Foot Soldiers for Liberation: The American Freedom Struggle."

Omit technical terms, jargon, and unfamiliar words. For example, “Health and Disease in the Middle Ages” is clearer than “Paleopathology and Textual Analysis: Interrogating Medieval Epidemics.”

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.

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

Yes. NEH encourages applicants to seek support from diverse sources. Submitting proposals to other funders has no bearing on how NEH reviews proposals. We do ask that you tell us about those applications, so that we can better understand the project’s funding situation. Note that overlapping project costs between two or more applications for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets is not permitted.

May I use an NEH Humanities Initiatives award to acquire equipment, materials, and supplies?

The acquisition of equipment, materials, and supplies is allowable when it supports the primary purpose of an NEH Humanities Initiatives project. For example, work on a new website developed in the course of a series of faculty workshops may be facilitated by the purchase of a computer. NEH Humanities Initiatives awards may also support the purchase of materials for project participants’ in-depth study of a topic in the humanities. The acquisition of closely related titles for a college library may sustain further research by faculty and students.

May I use an NEH Humanities Initiatives award for the pursuit of independent research?

No. NEH does, however, support independent research in the humanities through its [Public Scholar](#), [NEH-Mellon Fellowships for Digital Publication](#), [Fellowships](#), [Fellowships for Advanced Social Science Research on Japan](#), and [Summer Stipends](#) programs, as well as the Awards for Faculty [at Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#), [at Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#), and [at Tribal Colleges and Universities](#).

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.

What is the deadline for submitting the application?

Applications for NEH Humanities Initiatives awards must be received and validated by [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on July 12, 2019. Grants.gov will date- and time-stamp your application after it is fully uploaded. Applications submitted after that date will not be accepted.

NEH suggests that you submit your application no later than noon (Eastern Time) on the day of the deadline. Doing so will leave you time to contact the Grants.gov help desk for support, should you encounter a technical problem of some kind. The Grants.gov help desk is now available seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day (except on [federal holidays](#)), at 1-800-518-4726. You can also send an e-mail message to support@grants.gov.

How do I know if I have submitted my application successfully?

See the PDF document What to Expect after You Submit Your Application to Grants.gov, which is available [here](#).

How will my application be reviewed?

All applications will receive peer review. Using the review criteria listed in Section II of the application guidelines, teachers and scholars in the humanities will convene in panels to read and rate the applications. NEH staff will compile a slate of recommended applications based on the reviewers' comments and ratings. The [National Council on the Humanities](#) will review the recommendations and provide additional insights. All advice—from the reviewers, staff, and National Council—will be sent to the NEH Chairman. By law, only the Chairman is empowered to make an award. More details about NEH's review process are available [here](#).

How long must I wait to learn the outcome of my application?

Applicants will be notified of the decision by e-mail in late December 2019.