



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE  
**Humanities**

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

**PRESERVATION ASSISTANCE  
GRANTS**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**What expenses will a Preservation Assistance Grant cover?**

The grant will cover fees for consultants and assistants (including honoraria, travel, lodging, and per diem expenses), costs for preservation supplies and furniture, environmental monitoring equipment, workshop fees, and other allowable costs that can be allocated to the project.

See the answer to the second question on page 7 for information about additional activities that can be covered in requests from applicants in federally declared disaster areas.

See the answer to the last question on page 8 for information about additional activities that may be supported under the special encouragement related to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American independence.

**Does the program encourage applications from certain kinds of institutions?**

Yes. The program encourages applications from small and mid-sized institutions with significant humanities collections that have never received an NEH grant. The program also encourages applications from community colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Tribal Colleges and Universities), and from Native American tribes and Native Alaskan and Native Hawaiian organizations with significant humanities collections.

**Is an institution required to contribute funds from its own budget to a Preservation Assistance Grant project?**

No. Cost sharing is not required for Preservation Assistance Grants. However, if eligible expenses are more than \$10,000 (or \$15,000 for a project to cover expenses for consultations or planning activities related to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American independence), the applicant will need to cover the difference and show the amount in excess of the requested grant amount on the cost-sharing line of the Supplementary Cover Sheet and in the budget.

### **Are NEH staff members available to answer questions about an application?**

Yes. Applicants may contact NEH program staff to discuss applications prior to submission; however, the staff is not able to read draft proposals. The staff can be reached at 202-606-8570 or [preservation@neh.gov](mailto:preservation@neh.gov).

### **Are there lists available of previously-funded Preservation Assistance Grants?**

Yes. You can find a list of recent awards [here](#).

### **How do I determine the length of the period of performance?**

Preservation Assistance Grants are awarded for a period of performance of eighteen months, although a recipient may complete a project in a shorter period of time. In your narrative and work plan, you should show a schedule for your project activities. You should develop and present a schedule that can accommodate unexpected delays that might be encountered during the project. If your project involves a consultant, discuss the length of time that the consultant will need to complete the proposed work.

### **What levels of funding are available for the Preservation Assistance Grant program?**

In 2019, NEH is raising the maximum award for regular Preservation Assistance Grants to \$10,000. Under this opportunity, applicants may request funds for regular PAG activities (assessments, purchase of supplies/equipment, and education and training) and for activities that were previously considered “special encouragements”: for example, having an advanced student or recent graduate accompany a consultant for preservation assessments or education and training, and funding for applicants located in a federally declared disaster area with collections that were damaged in a recent disaster.

Applicants proposing activities related to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American independence special encouragement may request up to \$15,000 to engage in consultations and planning to improve an institution’s ability to care for, preserve, and provide access to American history collections.

### **How do I find the appropriate consultant and other preservation resources online?**

It is important to match the skills and experience of the consultant to the nature of the collections and the project’s activities. The links below may provide information that assists in your search for an appropriate consultant.

- The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), the national membership organization of conservation professionals, offers a free guide to conservation services on its website. Visit AIC’s website at [www.conservation-us.org/](http://www.conservation-us.org/).
- AIC also offers a website with conservation resources entitled CoOL (Conservation Online) at <http://cool.conservation-us.org>.

- The Regional Alliance for Preservation (RAP) is composed of regional conservation and preservation centers that offer preservation information, workshops, and assessments to libraries, archives, museums, and historical organizations. The staff at these organizations can offer advice or referrals. Visit RAP's website at <http://www.preservationresources.org/>.
- The Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS), which is a division of the American Library Association, offers learning resources for managing and preserving library collections at <http://www.ala.org/alcts/about>.
- The American Alliance of Museums offers resources on standards and best practices for museum operations (including preservation) at <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices>.
- The Academy of Certified Archivists promotes fundamental standards of professional archival practice and maintains an archival consultant referral service. Visit the academy's website at [www.certifiedarchivists.org](http://www.certifiedarchivists.org).

### **How much should my institution pay the consultant(s)?**

NEH does not recommend appropriate fees to be paid to consultants. You should discuss the proposed project in detail with the consultant and negotiate a mutually acceptable rate in compliance with [2 CFR §200 .459 Professional service costs](#).

### **What information should the consultant provide for inclusion in the application?**

A consultant must provide a two-page résumé and a letter of commitment. For a regular PAG application, the letter of commitment should describe the proposed activity or activities. It should include a detailed work plan and budget, and (if applicable) a preliminary list of supplies that the consultant recommends for purchase. If the consultant is working with an advanced student or recent graduate, the letter should also identify the academic program from which the student or graduate would be selected and should discuss the practical experience that the student or graduate would gain from the project. The letter should include a detailed work plan and budget and should indicate that the consultant is requesting funds to cover the student/graduate's expenses.

For the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary special encouragement, consultants must provide a two-page resume and a letter of commitment that describes the proposed activities, a work plan, and budget. The letter should include information about what the consultant would provide to the applicant, such as an assessment or planning report.

### **How do I identify training opportunities that I might want to attend?**

While you may not be able to identify a specific course that would be offered a year in advance, many institutes and educational programs make course listings available and can provide a list of program topics. You may use the current topics schedule as a guide. Alternatively, you may contact the provider to see if a similar course might be offered in the future.

## **How much information about my institution's humanities collections should I provide in the application?**

This section is one of the most important parts of your application and should be at least one full page in length. Specific information about your collections is vital in the evaluation of your application. Please take the time to describe the humanities content of your collections, identify the categories of materials in the collections, and indicate, where pertinent, the date ranges and quantities for the majority of the items.

A good description of an archival collection, for example, might begin by stating that the collection comprises two hundred letters by a school teacher written between 1870 and 1885; twenty-four linear feet of records pertaining to a local business active from 1940 through 1970; fifty-two maps documenting the history and development of the locality; twelve volumes of birth and death records for local residents from 1860 to 1950; and nine hundred photographs from a photographic studio active during the 1930s and 1940s.

A good description of a museum collection might begin by stating that there are ten thousand objects from the early 1800s to the present, including approximately one thousand costumes and items of personal adornment, five hundred Native American baskets, four hundred agricultural implements, and hundreds of household products and furnishings.

In all cases, the description should explain why the collections have humanities significance, and what sort of humanists (for example, scholars, teachers, creators of humanities public programming) could make use of them.

If the project focuses only on a portion of the collections, briefly describe the overall collections and then provide details about the portion to be surveyed or preserved.

## **What should I include in my description of the way in which my institution uses its collections for humanities research, education, or public programming?**

By discussing the use of collections, applicants will help evaluators understand their importance to the humanities. Please be specific. For example, if the collections have been featured in an exhibition about the history of your community, list the exhibition's main topics and the time period covered. If the collections have been used by teachers in the classroom, indicate the lessons that featured the collections. If the collections are available for research, describe the range of subjects that have been or could be explored.

## **A previous preservation survey has indicated that my institution needs to improve the environment for its humanities collections. Is funding available for the purchase and installation of climate control equipment?**

Preservation Assistance Grants may not be used to support the installation or improvement of building systems, such as climate control, security, or fire protection systems. Applicants seeking support to plan or implement sustainable preservation approaches to climate control, storage and collections management, security, or fire protection should consider the [Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections](#) grants program.

### **What do you mean by “preventive conservation strategies that pragmatically balance effectiveness, cost, and environmental impact”?**

Preventive conservation involves managing relative humidity, temperature, light, and pollutants in collection spaces; providing protective storage enclosures and systems for collections; and safeguarding collections from theft and from natural and man-made disasters.

We encourage sustainable approaches to preventive conservation, which will vary depending on the nature of an institution and its collections, and its location and climate zone. Some examples include

- understanding your collections, their conditions, and the particular risks that they face, rather than relying on ideal and prescriptive targets;
- understanding the characteristics and performance of the building in which your collections are housed, its envelope and its systems, and their role in moderating interior environmental conditions;
- considering the impact of the local climate on establishing relative humidity and temperature setpoints and managing interior environmental conditions;
- weighing initial and ongoing energy use, the cost, and the environmental impact of potential preservation strategies;
- looking first for passive (that is, nonmechanical) ways to improve and manage collection environments; and
- developing solutions tailored to the capabilities of the organization and its staff.

### **What is the difference between the Preservation Assistance Grants (PAG) program and the Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections (SCHC) program?**

Both programs support preventive conservation, but they differ significantly in scope. PAG is mainly directed at small and mid-sized libraries, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions that seek to improve their ability to preserve and care for their humanities collections. In a typical project a single consultant offers basic advice on caring for humanities collections. The PAG program also supports the purchase of preservation supplies and staff training. The maximum award amount is \$10,000. For applicants proposing activities under the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary special encouragement, the maximum award amount is \$15,000.

The SCHC program, on the other hand, focuses on the challenge of preserving large and diverse holdings of humanities materials for future generations through sustainable conservation measures that mitigate deterioration and prolong the useful life of collections. A hallmark of SCHC projects is the involvement of interdisciplinary teams that might include architects, building engineers, conservation scientists, conservators, curators, archivists, and facilities managers, among others. Many SCHC projects are large and complex; applicants may request up to \$40,000 for planning grants and up to \$350,000 for implementation grants.

You can learn more about the SCHC program [here](#).

**I have received funding elsewhere for a preservation assessment. On the basis of that assessment, I want to apply for a Preservation Assistance Grant to purchase storage furniture. Is this permissible?**

Yes. Requests to purchase storage furniture must be based on a previous consultation with a preservation professional or on recommendations from a preservation assessment. Many applicants have had consultations or conducted assessments with support from sources—both private and governmental—other than NEH. When a proposed project is based on a prior consultation or assessment, you should provide the executive summary of the assessment report and any sections of the report relevant to the proposed activities as supporting documentation. If you have obtained advice from a preservation professional, we recommend that you include as part of the application a letter of support from that consultant.

**What assistance is offered for digital collections?**

Applicants may apply for general preservation assessments and consultations with professionals to assess the preservation needs of their digital collections. Through the education and training component of Preservation Assistance Grants applicants may request support for training that focuses on both preservation and access issues for digital collections. For example, an institution could apply for support to attend workshops on such topics as standards and best practices for the preservation of digital collections, or the care and handling of collections during digitization.

Under the special encouragement for activities related to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American independence, applicants may request funds for consultations with humanities professionals for planning that might position the applicant to undertake digitization of American history collections in the future.

Preservation Assistance Grants cannot, however, support the digitization of collections. Applicants with projects focused on planning for digitization should consider the [Humanities Collections and Reference Resources](#) grant program.

**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.

## **Requests from Applicants in Federally Declared Disaster Areas**

### **What sorts of applicants can apply for disaster-related funding?**

Small to mid-sized non-profit cultural heritage institutions with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, state and local government agencies, federally recognized Native American tribal governments, and public and nonprofit institutions of higher education are eligible, if they have humanities collections that have suffered damage from recent natural disasters (such as hurricanes, wildfires, or mudslides), and if they are located in a federally declared disaster area. (Foreign and for-profit entities and individuals are not eligible to apply.)

### **What kind of activities are supported under the PAG program, and how much money may I request?**

In addition to regular PAG activities, applicants that are located within federally declared disaster areas with collections that were damaged by a recent disaster may undertake the following sorts of activities: disaster planning and mitigation, preservation assessments, conservation treatment, the temporary relocation and storage of collections, the purchase of emergency supplies and equipment, education and training for disaster planning and response, and the reformatting of collections (when appropriate as a preservation strategy). The maximum award for PAG disaster-related funding is \$10,000.

### **What kind of reformatting of collections is eligible under the disaster-related funding?**

Reformatting of collections is not an eligible activity in Preservation Assistance Grants. Applicants requesting disaster-related funding may, however, propose reformatting of audiovisual collections, for instance, if they were damaged as a result of the disasters, and if reformatting has been recommended as an appropriate preservation strategy.

### **How will the applications for disaster-related funding be evaluated?**

Applications for disaster-related funding will be evaluated by the same criteria used for standard PAG applications. Applicants should include information about the extent of damage to collections, the steps taken to protect collections, and the status of disaster planning at their institutions.

### **What if my institution is located in a federally designated disaster area but didn't suffer any damage?**

You may apply for the standard Preservation Assistance Grant support (up to \$10,000). If you are proposing a project related to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American independence, you may request up to \$15,000.

### **Can disaster-related funds be used for repair or renovation of buildings or other structures damaged by disasters?**

No. Disaster-related funds are intended for the care and treatment of damaged *collections*. Eligible activities include disaster planning and mitigation, conservation treatment, the



temporary relocation and storage of collections, the purchase of emergency supplies and equipment, education and training for disaster planning and response, and the reformatting of collections.

### **Can NEH identify other resources for cultural institutions affected by the recent natural disasters?**

Please consult the following:

#### **Heritage Emergency National Task Force**

<http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/113297>

#### **Alliance for Response**

<http://www.heritageemergency.org/initiatives/alliance-for-response/afr-home/>

#### **Alliance for Response South Florida**

<http://www.heritageemergency.org/initiatives/alliance-for-response/networks/miami/>

#### **Texas Cultural Emergency Response Alliance (TX-CERA)**

<https://txcera.org/>

#### **General Resources from the American Institute for Conservation and Regional Centers**

<https://www.conservation-us.org/resources/disaster-response-recovery#>

<https://caha.org/emergency-planning-response>

<https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/disaster-assistance/emergency-phone-assistance>

<http://resources.conservation-us.org/disaster/resources/>

If you are looking for resources specific to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, please contact NEH's Division of Preservation and Access at 202-606-8570 or [preservation@neh.gov](mailto:preservation@neh.gov).

### **250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of American Independence Special Encouragement**

#### **What kinds of preservation activities are supported under the special encouragement related to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American independence?**

Applicants may request funds up to \$15,000 to support consultations with humanities professionals (for example, American historians, archivists, librarians, preservation specialists, and/or curators) for planning that would position the institution to undertake, at a later stage, cataloging and/or arranging and describing collections of original sources pertaining to American history; digitizing American history collections; providing conservation treatment for items relating to American history; and/or engaging the public in contributing primary sources on American history for digitization and/or providing crowdsourced descriptions or transcriptions of such materials. Applicants may also request funds for consultants to offer education and training that would position the institution in capacity-building and leadership to improve its care of American history collections.



**Can my institution apply for regular PAG activities, like a preservation assessment or purchase of supplies, and for planning for 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities in the same application?**

Yes, applicants may request support for regular PAG activities (such as a preservation assessment or purchase of preservation supplies/equipment) and for consultations or planning for care of American history collections related to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary special encouragement. The total request may not exceed \$15,000.

**What additional information should an applicant for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary special encouragement provide?**

In the narrative, please explain how your collections help to illuminate the themes noted in the description of this encouragement. The consultant should also include information in the letter about what he/she would provide to the applicant, such as an assessment or planning report.