



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

DIVISION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Public Humanities Projects

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Humanities content and advisers

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 the 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.”

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.

Who should be on my team of humanities advisers?

Humanities teams should be designed to provide the core project team with multiple perspectives on the subject. Teams should be comprised of different sorts of people. The members of the team should offer a range of expertise, ensuring that all the main project themes will receive adequate attention. The most competitive applications will include experts representing different institutions to prevent insularity or bias. There is no recommended or typical number of advisers. The size of the team should be determined by the number needed to achieve the balance and range of expertise necessary. The team should include individuals like these:

- **Humanities Scholars:** Every project is required to include scholars from humanities disciplines. Someone who has an advanced degree in a discipline of the humanities is generally considered a scholar. These individuals are important for providing context for a project and identifying relevant humanities themes and ideas.
- **Subject Area Experts:** Projects may also include individuals who do not possess an advanced degree but nevertheless have a demonstrated record of working, teaching, and/or publishing in a humanities discipline. Such individuals will likely be recognized by others in the field as an area expert. These individuals may be important in developing major themes.
- **Community Experts:** Some projects will find it necessary to include community members with special knowledge of cultural traditions or local history, such as Native American tribal elders, or local historians. Community experts might also possess specialized skills or specific information related to the locality or target audience, such as teachers familiar with the local K-12 curriculum requirements or members of local religious or civic organizations who are familiar with the history, needs, and concerns of a target audience. These individuals may be critical to focusing on the most appropriate theme ideas, developing effective methods of audience engagement, and building successful outreach strategies.

When should I start consulting with scholars about a project?

As a general rule, the earlier scholars are involved in a project, the better. Projects recommended for funding are usually ones in which scholars have helped shape the project's conceptual framework.

Is it okay to rely on a single scholar for a project?

Projects that depend on input from a single scholar are not competitive. Working with a number of scholars allows projects to explore a diverse range of interpretive possibilities.

How do I find the right scholarly advisers for a project?

There are many ways to find scholars for your project. Check with your local college or university to see if any faculty members have relevant expertise or could suggest the names of other scholars. You can also peruse bookstores (either real or online), libraries, and Web resources to see who has published on topics related to your project. [State humanities councils](#) often maintain lists of scholars who have participated in public programs. You can also contact professional associations or consult published directories of scholars.

How much should I 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) grants

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?

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 I am implementing a museum exhibition that will be accompanied by a website and a short film based on the exhibition, should I apply only to PHP or should I submit multiple applications to different NEH grant programs?

Many PHP projects have 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 guidelines for describing the exhibition and related components. The NEH Division of Public Programs will NOT accept multiple applications for separate components of the same project at the same deadline: for example, one application to PHP for a museum exhibition and a separate application to Media Projects to support production of a film related to the exhibition.

What if I 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.

Do I need to apply for a planning grant before I apply for an implementation grant?

No. Organizations may apply for any 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.

Where should I apply if I 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. (The program's development guidelines can be found [here](#), and production guidelines can be found [here](#).)

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 grant. 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?

Applicants for PHP implementation grants are eligible to apply for support of Positions in Public Humanities, but applicants for PHP **planning grants** are not. Implementation applicants may request an additional \$30,000 (for projects with a one-year period of performance) or \$60,000 (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 \$30,000 would be used to support a one-year entry-level position. The \$60,000 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 on the [program resource page](#).

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.

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 and to share samples of previously funded projects. The staff can be reached at 202-606-8269 or publicpgms@neh.gov. NEH recommends that drafts be submitted by November 28, 2018, to ensure sufficient time to respond. Responses cannot be guaranteed if drafts arrive late.

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

No, foreign entities (as well as individuals and for-profit entities) are not eligible to apply. The only eligible applicants are U.S. nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, state and local governmental agencies, and federally recognized Native American tribal governments are eligible to apply. Eligible organizations include institutions of higher education.

Otherwise eligible American institutions may, however, 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.

3. Submitting an application

Must I submit my application through Grants.gov?

Yes, you must submit your application through Grants.gov. In order to do so, you must have completed information in three separate systems: Dun and Bradstreet (<https://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>); System for Award Management (SAM) (<https://www.sam.gov>); and Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>).

Be sure to read the [document](#) (PDF) that explains how to confirm that you successfully submitted your application. It is your responsibility as an applicant to confirm that Grants.gov and subsequently NEH have accepted your application.

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 (as well as foreign entities and for-profit entities) are not eligible to apply. The only eligible applicants are U.S. nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, state and local governmental agencies, and federally recognized Native American tribal governments are eligible to apply. Eligible organizations include institutions of higher education.

Nevertheless, many cultural organizations, arts centers, and universities serve as sponsors of projects and may be willing to partner with you and participate in your proposed project. Individuals who wish to apply for NEH funding from the PHP program must partner with an eligible organization. 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. Please contact a program officer for a list of recent grant recipients, which includes examples of nonprofit organizations that were awarded grants. For further information on the specific responsibilities of sponsorship organizations, please see [Requirements for Grant Recipients that Serve as Sponsors of Projects](#).

May the same project director or institution 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 the same project director apply for funds two years in a row?

Yes. Unsuccessful applicants may even 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. Budget and grant funds

If I receive NEH funding, may I also accept funding from other sources?

Yes. We encourage applicants to approach a range of funders, as it is unlikely that NEH can support the full costs of a project.

Do I 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 consists of the cash contributions made to a project by nonfederal third parties that are 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. Although cost sharing is not required, the program is rarely able to support the full costs of projects approved for funding.