



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE  
**Humanities**

DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

**PUBLIC SCHOLAR PROGRAM**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**I. Eligibility**

**1. I am an independent scholar (or a journalist or other writer unaffiliated with a college or university). What are my chances of receiving a fellowship from the Public Scholar Program?**

Your chances are the same as any other applicant's. The Public Scholar Program encourages applications from any applicant, regardless of affiliation, who has a compelling project. All applicants to the Public Scholar Program must propose a significant book that is likely to appeal to general audiences and must also present evidence of their qualifications, including previous publications and public appearances, presentations, and other relevant experience.

**2. I am a graduate student. Am I eligible to apply to the Public Scholar Program?**

No. Students enrolled in a degree program are not eligible to apply to the Public Scholar Program.

**3. I am translating a book that reached a popular audience abroad. Am I eligible to apply to the Public Scholar Program?**

No. Applications for translation projects by a single scholar should be directed to NEH's [Fellowships](#) program. Applications for translation projects by a team of two or more collaborators should be directed to the [Scholarly Editions and Translations](#) program.

**4. I am involved in a collaborative project. Can collaborators split an award?**

No. The Public Scholar Program is designed primarily for individual researchers. Awards may not be divided. If you seek funding for a co-author, each person seeking funding must submit a separate application specifying the individual contribution. External reviewers will be asked to evaluate each application on its own merits. Each application should clearly explain how the work will be divided and the extent to which each collaborator's contribution depends on that of the other(s). Applicants who are seeking funding only for themselves but who are working as part of a collaborative team are eligible. In this case, too, the application should clearly explain

how the work will be divided and the extent to which each collaborator's contribution depends on that of the other(s). Applicants proposing to work together may wish to apply instead or in addition for an NEH [Collaborative Research](#) grant.

**5. I am working on a book that is primarily addressed to scholars or people with a professional interest in my topic. May I apply to the Public Scholar Program?**

No. The Public Scholar Program supports only books intended to appeal to a general audience. Scholars who are working in a specialized field should apply instead to the NEH [Fellowships](#) program or the [Summer Stipends](#) program.

**6. My project fits the goals of the Public Scholar Program, but I have not previously published a book with a commercial or university press. Am I eligible to apply?**

Yes, provided that you have published at least three articles or essays in print or electronic publications that reach a large national or international audience of general readers. Articles or essays appearing in peer-reviewed academic journals or other publications aimed primarily at readers with a professional interest in the material do not satisfy this requirement. If you do not meet the requirement for previous publication, you may wish to apply instead to the NEH [Fellowships](#) program or the [Summer Stipends](#) program.

**7. May I apply for a Public Scholar Program award to revise and publish my dissertation?**

No. You may, however, apply to the NEH [Fellowships](#) program or [Summer Stipends](#) program.

## **II. Other Fellowship Opportunities**

**1. May I apply for other NEH grants to support the same project that I am submitting to the Public Scholar Program?**

Yes. NEH encourages applicants to apply to all programs for which they are eligible. Applicants to the Public Scholar Program at the February 6, 2019 deadline may subsequently apply—at their April 2019 deadlines—to the [Fellowships](#) program or to one of the Awards for Faculty programs (for [Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#), [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#), or [Tribal Colleges and Universities](#)). They may also apply to the NEH [Summer Stipends](#) program—or (in collaboration with at least one other project participant) to the [Collaborative Research](#) or [Scholarly Editions and Translations](#) program.

**2. What if I am offered more than one award?**

An individual may not hold two or more NEH individual awards (for example, a Fellowship and a Public Scholar award or a Summer Stipend) with overlapping periods of performance. Nor may an individual work on a project supported by an NEH institutional award as either a project director or participant during the period of performance of an NEH individual award that is held full time.

Additional restrictions may apply if you are a recipient of, or a participant in, multiple NEH awards. Please contact program staff for details.

You may not hold a Public Scholar award for a project previously supported by an NEH Fellowship, a Public Scholar award, or an Award for Faculty, no matter when the previous award was held. You may, however, hold a Public Scholar award for a project previously supported by a two-month NEH Summer Stipend.

### **3. Are there other grant opportunities related to NEH that I should be aware of as an individual researcher?**

In addition to offering the programs mentioned above (under “1. May I apply for other NEH grants. . .”), NEH partners with several other organizations to offer support for individual researchers:

#### *Library of Congress (LOC) – John W. Kluge Center Fellowships*

Projects that draw on the collections of the Library of Congress are eligible for support. Interested applicants should apply directly to [LOC's Kluge Center Fellowships Program](#). These fellowships are available only to applicants who have received a terminal advanced degree within the past seven years in the humanities, social sciences, or in a professional field such as architecture or law.

#### *NEH Grants for Fellowship Programs at Independent Research Institutions (FPIRI)*

Projects to be undertaken at independent centers for advanced study, libraries, and museums in the United States, and research centers overseas, are eligible for support. Individual scholars must apply directly to the institutions themselves. Available [here](#) is a list of currently funded institutions.

#### *Japan-United States Friendship Commission (JUSFC) – [Fellowships for Advanced Social Science Research on Japan](#)*

Subjects may include modern Japanese political economy, international relations and society, and United States-Japan relations. Applicants may consult the [JUSFC website](#) for additional information.

#### *NEH and National Science Foundation Fellowship Program for Documenting Endangered Languages (DEL)*

Projects on endangered languages are eligible for support. A full description of the DEL program is located [here](#).

### III. Application and References

#### 1. What help is available for preparing the proposal?

NEH staff members are not able to comment on draft proposals intended for the Public Scholar Program. NEH staff will, however, answer questions about preparing your proposal and about your eligibility. The staff may be reached at (202) 606-8200 and at [publicscholar@neh.gov](mailto:publicscholar@neh.gov).

#### 2. How should I title my proposal? Does NEH change project titles?

Your title should be descriptive of the project, substantive, and free of specialized language. It should be easily understood by the general public. The title should not exceed 125 characters (including spaces and punctuation). Your NEH project title should not necessarily be the same as the title of your proposed book.

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.”

When possible, include places and dates indicating a project’s scope. For example, “Faith and Belief among New York City Catholics, 1945-1970” is clearer than “Faith and Belief in the Catholic Community.”

If a person is mentioned in your title, include dates and a descriptor. For example, “A Biography of German Philosopher Klaus von Guberstopper (1834-1910)” is clearer than “A Biography of Klaus von Guberstopper.”

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.”

Omit technical terms, jargon, and unfamiliar words. For example, “Time, Space, and Clocks in the 19th-Century British Novel” is clearer than “Chronotopes and Horologies in the 19th-Century British Novel.”

You should provide the project title in section 6.a. of the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance – Individual Form. This form is part of the Grants.gov application package. It is explained in the program guidelines (funding opportunity announcement) under Section III, STEP 4.

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.

**3. One of my referees cannot submit a letter online. Is there an alternative?**

NEH strongly encourages referees to submit their letters online. If they are unable to do so, referees may e-mail letters to [publicscholar@neh.gov](mailto:publicscholar@neh.gov). It is possible, though, that e-mailed letters will not be added to your application file as quickly as letters that are submitted online.

**4. Will I be notified as to whether my letter writers have submitted their letters?**

Yes. NEH will notify you by e-mail when each of your letters of reference has arrived. After Grants.gov notifies you that NEH has received your application, you may also check the status of your letters of reference by logging in to the [secure area of NEH's website](#). Enter your NEH application number and your Grants.gov tracking number. You will be able to see the names and e-mail addresses of your letter writers and whether their letters have arrived. If necessary, you may send reminders to your letter writers (including the upload link) from this site.

**5. One or both of my referees did not receive the e-mail from NEH requesting the upload of his or her letter. What should I do?**

NEH will not send out requests for letters until seven to ten days after the February 6 application deadline. If, even allowing for this, one of your referees has not received such a request, it is usually because a junk e-mail filter captured the request or because you supplied an incorrect e-mail address (the NEH system uses the address exactly as you enter it). You may resend the upload link to your referees by logging in to the [secure area of the NEH website](#). If you need to correct an error in an e-mail address, please contact the program staff at [publicscholar@neh.gov](mailto:publicscholar@neh.gov).

In any case, NEH strongly encourages you to confirm that your letter writers have received the upload link before the **February 27, 2019** deadline for submitting letters. You are responsible for ensuring that your letters have arrived by the deadline.

**6. Is it possible to change a referee after the application deadline?**

Yes. To do so, please contact the program staff at [publicscholar@neh.gov](mailto:publicscholar@neh.gov). Indicate which referee you would like to replace and provide the contact information, including e-mail address, for the new referee.

**7. Are late letters of reference accepted?**

Yes. NEH will automatically add all letters to your file as soon as the referees upload them. But if an external reviewer has already reviewed the file, it is unlikely that he or she will take the late letter into account.

**8. Does a missing letter of reference disqualify my application?**

No. Your application will still be eligible for review and for an award. Evaluators may, however, find your application less persuasive if one or both letters are missing.

**9. After the application deadline, I was offered a contract for publication of my book. May I update my application to reflect this?**

After the application deadline has passed, you may not change your application or add material to your file (apart from letters of reference).

**10. How will my application be reviewed?**

All applications receive peer review. Scholars in the humanities will read and rate your application, using the evaluation criteria listed in Section II of the application guidelines. NEH staff comments on matters of fact or on significant issues that otherwise would be missing from these reviews, then makes recommendations to the National Council on the Humanities. The National Council meets at various times during the year to advise the NEH chairman. The chairman takes into account the advice provided by the review process and, by law, makes all funding decisions. More details about NEH's review process are available [here](#).

**11. Can I see the evaluators' comments after the competition?**

Yes. The notification you receive about the decision made on your application will contain instructions for requesting the evaluators' comments. If your application is unsuccessful, the comments may help you revise it for resubmission.

**IV. Using Grants.gov**

**1. How do I know if I have submitted my application successfully?**

**After you submit your application, Grants.gov will send you up to five e-mail messages confirming receipt of your application. These messages represent different stages in the application acceptance process. You should verify that you have received all of the following five confirmation messages. Please note that e-mail filters may send these messages to your spam or junk folder.**

**It is your responsibility as an applicant to confirm that Grants.gov and subsequently NEH have accepted your application, by verifying that you have received all five of the messages described here.**

**Message 1:** After you submit your application, Grants.gov will immediately assign the application a Grants.gov tracking number (a number like GRANT11791444). Grants.gov will send you an e-mail with this number. The subject line of the message will include the words "Grants.gov Submission Receipt."

**Message 2:** At this point Grants.gov attempts to validate the application. If everything checks out, Grants.gov will send you a **second** e-mail confirming that it validated the application, and that it will send the application to NEH. The subject line of the message will include the words "Grants.gov Submission Validation Receipt for Application." (This message—and all subsequent messages from Grants.gov—again includes the Grants.gov tracking number.) But if Grants.gov discovers a problem with the application (for example, the project description component of the

Application for Federal Domestic Assistance exceeds the thousand-character limit, or a file name includes an unacceptable character such as a comma), then the attempt at validation fails; Grants.gov accordingly rejects the application. Grants.gov would then send you a message, indicating that the application has been “rejected with errors,” and that you must resubmit. Once you correct the error and resubmit, the process starts all over again. (In other words, Grants.gov would then send you a new version of Message 1, including a new Grants.gov tracking number.) Note that NEH does not receive an application that Grants.gov rejects because it has errors.

**Message 3:** After Grants.gov has validated the application, NEH uploads the application. Grants.gov then sends you a **third** e-mail to that effect. The subject line of the message will include the words “Grants.gov Agency Retrieval Receipt for Application.” (The “agency” mentioned in the subject line is NEH, which Grants.gov also calls the “grantor agency.”)

**Message 4:** At this point, NEH assigns its own application number (different from the Grants.gov tracking number) to the application. (The NEH application number will begin with two or three capital letters, followed by a hyphen, followed by six numbers: for example, HD-123456, or HDD-123456.) NEH then informs Grants.gov of the application number that it has assigned. Grants.gov then sends you a **fourth** e-mail, providing the NEH application number (as well as, again, the Grants.gov tracking number). The subject line of the message will include the words “Grants.gov Agency Tracking Number Assignment for Application.” (What Grants.gov calls the “agency tracking number” is what NEH calls the application number.)

**Message 5:** Now that NEH has the application, it runs its own check to make sure that the application’s attachments are in proper PDF format. If everything is OK, NEH informs Grants.gov that it has accepted the application. Grants.gov then sends you a **fifth** e-mail, informing you that NEH has accepted the application. The subject line of the message will include the words “Grants.gov Agency Notes Assigned for Application.” (If NEH accepts the application, the “Agency Notes” are as follows: “Application accepted by agency.”) But if NEH rejects the application, NEH sends its own e-mail directly to you. In that case you will receive two e-mails, one from NEH and one from Grants.gov. The NEH e-mail will inform you of the problem with the application (for example, an attachment was not submitted as a PDF). It will also tell you that you need to correct the error and then to resubmit. In that case the e-mail that Grants.gov sends you will reiterate the fact that NEH rejected the application because of problems with the attachments. After you receive these e-mails you must resubmit the application and await receipt of the five messages explained here.

Grants.gov normally sends these e-mail messages within twenty-four hours of the submission of an application. Delays can, however, occur when system usage is heavy. Each message includes your application’s Grants.gov tracking number, and the fourth and fifth messages also include the NEH application number. Keep these messages for your records.

If you receive a message (ordinarily, the second or the fifth message) indicating that your application has been rejected, read it carefully. It should explain what was wrong with your application, and what you must do to fix the problem. Once you fix the problem, you can resubmit the application (so long as you do so before the program’s application deadline).

If you submit an application and don’t receive all five of the e-mail messages, check your “spam” folder, which may contain one or more of them. If you still can’t find them, contact Grants.gov



immediately to determine the status of your application, by calling 1-800-518-GRANTS (4726) or sending an e-mail to [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). Include the Grants.gov tracking number in correspondence regarding the application. You can also use the Grants.gov [Track my Application](#) tool to check the status of your application.

## **2. What is the Application for Federal Assistance - Individual Form, and where do I find it?**

The Application for Federal Assistance - Individual Form is a standard government application form. It is one of the documents that you will need to complete in order to submit your application to Grants.gov. To begin filling out the form, type your name in the “Application Filing Name” field that appears when you open the form. (In Section III of the guidelines, “Submitting your Application,” see the discussion of Form I under STEP 4.)

## **3. What is a DUNS number? What is a TIN/EIN number? How do I find out my institution’s numbers?**

DUNS stands for “data universal numbering system.” DUNS numbers are issued by Dun and Bradstreet (D & B) and consist of nine digits. TIN/EIN stands for “Taxpayer Identification Number/Employer Identification Number.” These numbers are generally available from an institution’s sponsored research office or at your institution’s website. If you have a U.S. institutional affiliation, you must provide the DUNS number on the NEH Supplemental Form for Individuals in order to ensure that your application is processed correctly.

More information about DUNS numbers is available [here](#).

## **4. Why must I provide a DUNS number? Isn’t this a program for individual applicants, not institutional applicants?**

The Public Scholar Program is indeed for individual applicants, not institutional applicants. Nevertheless, applicants affiliated with a U.S. institution must provide the institution’s DUNS number, in order to ensure that institutions’ names are listed correctly in the NEH database and in the materials that we provide to external reviewers.