



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

**RESEARCH AND
DEVELOPMENT**

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 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.”

I do not see my project idea represented in the list of Collection and Format Types, Research Fields, and Topics that is found on the [program resource page](#). Does this mean that my project is not eligible?

No. The list is not exhaustive or comprehensive. We welcome well-constructed projects across a variety of disciplines that advance the preservation of and/or access to cultural heritage collections.

Is completion of a Tier I grant project a prerequisite for requesting a Tier II grant?

No. You do not have to progress from a Tier I grant to a Tier II grant, but Tier II projects should demonstrate sound planning and preliminary research. Support for that planning might come from NEH, from other federal or foundation awards, or from an institution’s own funds.

I have a Tier I project that will not scale to a larger implementation project. Can I still apply?

Yes. Tier I projects may be stand-alone studies or experiments and do not have to involve planning or preliminary research for a larger project. NEH welcomes discrete projects to conduct a case study or survey, or to develop a tool or undertake basic research. A proposal must demonstrate how the project advances knowledge in cultural heritage preservation and access.

Am I required to provide a dissemination plan for my project?

Research and Development projects should seek to address wide-ranging issues relevant to a diverse audience of institutions and professional communities. As such, both Tier I and Tier II projects are required to submit a separate one- to two-page plan detailing how they will disseminate project results to their intended audiences. Your dissemination strategy must be coordinated with your project's work plan and budget.

The guidelines refer to “interdisciplinary teams.” What do you mean by this, and what constitutes the right kinds of disciplines?

Many project teams will include members from humanities disciplines and from other fields such as preservation and information, computer, and natural science. The exact mix of specialists will depend on the particular nature of the project. While NEH strongly encourages projects that bring together participants from various backgrounds, and expects applicants to explain how their project results will be broadly significant, you must also articulate the direct benefits that your project will have for humanities work, including research, educational programming, or public programming. In short, your project team should embody a well-defined humanities perspective that can frame your objectives and guide the project to successful completion. Such a perspective may be provided by members of an advisory committee, consultant(s), a project co-director, or another participant.

Am I required to include a sustainability plan? If so, how do I craft one?

Your application doesn't have to include a separate sustainability plan. However, all applicants must address the sustainability of their project—which includes ensuring long-term access to project data and outcomes—in their narrative. Sustainability may be defined in many different ways (to incorporate, for example, financial, technical, and institutional sustainability), depending on the nature of the project. For projects involving scientific experiments, any data collected must be made accessible, in order to ensure that test results are replicable. In this case, you may find it helpful to format your discussion of sustainability as a data management plan along the lines of what the National Science Foundation and other grantmaking agencies (including NEH) require. (You can find information about the data management plans required by the NEH Office of Digital Humanities for some of its grant programs [here](#).) You must include critical information regarding sustainability in the narrative, but you may also include a data management plan as an appendix. Regardless of the nature of your project, NEH recommends coordinating with a preservation specialist, such as your institutional librarian or archivist or an outside consultant, in planning for sustainability.

May a non-U.S. institution or organization apply for a grant?

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.

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.

Am I prohibited from working with employees from a federally supported institution and using its lab space and equipment?

Not necessarily. In principle, any eligible applicant may collaborate with a federal entity, so long as NEH funds do not explicitly support costs related to the federal entity, including, but not limited to, staff salaries, facility costs, materials, and equipment rentals. An application may be deemed ineligible when a proposed project becomes so closely intertwined with a federal entity that it takes on characteristics of the federal entity’s own authorized activities. Should your project involve a federal entity, we strongly recommend contacting a program officer before the deadline to discuss the parameters of the working relationship. We also recommend including with your application a letter from the federal entity acknowledging the strict separation of federal funds and providing assurance that the project does not take on the characteristics of its own authorized activities. Please note that NEH will make formal decisions regarding the eligibility of applications only *after* the application deadline.

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.

Will NEH accept late applications?

No. To be considered, an application must be received by Grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on the day of the deadline: May 15, 2019.

Who will read my application?

Specialists and nonspecialists will evaluate your application. Your narrative should therefore explain the project's significance and provide an overview of its methodology in terms that will be understandable to scholars outside your particular field of expertise. The narrative should also demonstrate a command of the literature relevant to the project and provide detailed information about the procedures to be used to accomplish the project's goals.

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

Yes. Applicants are encouraged to seek other financial support. We do ask that you tell us about proposals to other funding sources, so that we can better understand the project's financial picture. Overlapping project costs between two or more applications for federal funding and/or approved federal award budgets is not permitted.

If I am requesting additional NEH funding to continue my project, should I describe the project anew or will evaluators have access to the earlier grant proposal?

NEH treats all applications as new applications. Reviewers will not have access to the previous application; therefore, proposals for renewed funding must discuss the project anew. Be sure to describe the work accomplished with previous NEH funding and be clear about the specific activities and products of the new grant.

What are indirect costs?

Indirect costs (also known as "facilities and administrative" or F & A costs) are those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objective specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. To facilitate equitable distribution of indirect expenses to the cost objectives served, it may be necessary to establish a number of pools of indirect (F & A) costs. Indirect (F & A) cost pools must be distributed to benefitted cost objectives on bases that will produce an equitable result in consideration of relative benefits received. See [2 CFR §200.414](#) for additional information.

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 its federal grant applications.

With the exception of major nonprofit entities and governmental departments or units that receive more than \$35 million in direct federal funding during their fiscal year, any 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. An organization can negotiate a rate at any time. See [2 CFR §200.414\(f\)](#) for additional information.

My application for a Research and Development grant 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. In addition, program officers can review your draft application up to six weeks before the May 15, 2019, application deadline.

I have a research project with a digital component. Is Research and Development the most suitable program for my project?

NEH offers several grant opportunities that support digital projects. Research and Development supports new or ongoing investigations in a broadly defined area related to the preservation of—or access to—humanities content, whether in analog or digital format. These projects typically address a problem and propose a solution with far-reaching applications in one or more humanities disciplines or for the cultural heritage community. If your digital project is not centered on preservation or access, or if you have a more narrowly defined interpretive or analytical research agenda, you should consider several other NEH programs: in particular, [Collaborative Research Grants](#), [Digital Humanities Advancement Grants](#), and [Digital Projects for the Public](#). If you are uncertain as to which program is most appropriate for your project, please contact a Preservation and Access program officer (preservation@neh.gov, or 202-606-8570) in advance of submission. See also NEH's online resource Match Your Project to a Grant Program available at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/match-your-project>.