NEH Application-Writing Workshop

Co-sponsored by:

University of California, Santa Barbara and NEH Division of Research Programs

February 22-23, 2011
About the Endowment
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.
NEH Budget – FY 2009

National Endowment for the Humanities $115,000,000

- Division of Education $14,000,000
- Division of Public Programs $14,750,000
- Division of Research $15,000,000
- Division of Preservation & Access $16,000,000
- Office of Challenge Grants ~$10,000,000 Matching
- Office of Digital Humanities $4,000,000
- Federal/State Partnership $35,000,000
- Special Initiatives & Programs $15,800,000

Matching Federal/State Partnership $35,000,000

Office of Digital Humanities $4,000,000
Awards for Faculty at HBCUs, IHHEs, and TCUs - April 14
NEH Fellowships - May 3
Summer Stipends - September 29
Fellowship Programs at Independent Research Institutions - August 17
Collaborative Research/Scholarly Editions - December 15
Division of Education
Summer Seminars and Institutes:
Participants – March 1
Directors – March 1

Landmark Workshops for HS and Comm College Faculty:
Participants – March 1
Directors – March 1

Humanities Initiatives at HBCUs, IHHEs, and TCUs – June 30
Nadina Gardner, Director
(202) 606-8570
Preservation@neh.gov

Preservation Assistance Grants – May 3
Research and Development Project Grants – May 19
Education and Training Grants – June 30
National Digital Newspaper Program – January 13
Humanities Collections and Resources – July 20
Documenting Endangered Languages (with NSF) – September 15
Tom Phelps, Director
(202) 606-8270
PublicPgms@neh.gov

America’s Historical and Cultural Organizations Planning and Implementation Grants – August 17 and early January 2012

America’s Media Makers, Development and Production – August 17 and early January 2012
Office of Challenge Grants
Steve Ross, Director
(202) 606-8309
Challenge@neh.gov

Challenge Grants – May 4
Office of Digital Humanities
Brett Bobley, Director  
(202) 606-8364  
ODH@neh.gov  

Digital Humanities Start-Up Grants - February 23 and Summer  

Visit ODH website at http://www.neh.gov/odh/  

Subscribe to their digital newsletter:  
http://www.neh.gov/grants/digitalhumanities.html
Office of Federal/State Partnership
Ralph Lewin
President & CEO
rlewin@calhum.org

San Francisco Office
312 Sutter St., Suite 601
San Francisco, CA 94108

Los Angeles Office
1000 North Alameda Street, Suite 240
Los Angeles, CA 90012

PHONE: (415) 391-1474 PHONE: (213) 346-3234

Website: www.calhum.org

E-MAIL: info@calhum.org

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities
Application Process
How do I apply?

Step One: talk to someone at your institution.
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Step Two: visit the NEH website (www.neh.gov) and READ THE GUIDELINES
Step Three: Visit Grants.gov

- Register!!!!
- Find out your AOR
- Get comfortable with the Grants.gov system.
• Step Four: get samples and/or ask questions
• Step Five: draft your application and get someone to read it
• Step Six: submit your application by the deadline and wait...these things take time (usually 5-6 months)
Grant Evaluation Process

- Peer Review Panelists
- NEH staff
- National Council
- Chairman
NEH Funding Rates
(Division of Research, FY 2010)

Fellowships
Received 1235 applications, funded 111 (9%)

Summer Stipends
Received 1014 and funded 85 (8%)

Advanced Social Science Research on Japan
Received 34 and funded 2 (6%)
Peer Review Panels

• We group applications by field.
• Each set is assigned to a 4- or 5-member panel.
• Panelists rate 30-40 applications, and probably spend about 30 minutes per proposal on average.
Grant Application

1. Visit www.neh.gov for all guidelines. READ THEM.
2. Talk to people at PHC, on campus, etc.
3. Call us or email us with questions.
4. Request samples.
5. Draft your application.
6. Ask NEH staff and others to read your draft.
7. Submit your application by the deadline and wait. . . . These things take time (usually 5-6 months)
8. Regardless of the result, request feedback on your application.
Improve your chances of success

• Get a “why” or “why-not” letter with verbatim comments made by the panelists.
• Ask the staff to comment on a draft application.
• Become a panelist or reviewer.
• Read applications for your institution.
• Panelists will only know you’re applying again if you tell them; bitter words about a previous submission usually distract from your argument and take up space.
Tips for Writing

• There is no single formula for success
• Write grant application, not an essay
• Consider audience
• Think of all the parts of the application as forming a unified argument for funding you
• Think about the level of abstraction
• Your bibliography is important
• For a dissertation revision, explain how you will go beyond your thesis
Unofficial Alliterative Mnemonic

- Project
- Person
- Proposal
- Plan
- Probability [of successful completion]
Fellowships Evaluation Criteria

- The intellectual significance of the proposed project, including its value to humanities scholars, general audiences, or both.
- The quality or promise of quality of the applicant’s work as an interpreter of the humanities.
- The quality of the conception, definition, organization, and description of the project and the applicant’s clarity of expression.
- The feasibility of the proposed plan of work, including, when appropriate, the soundness of the dissemination and access plans.
- The likelihood that the applicant will complete the project.
Contact Information

NEH Division of Research
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Room 318
Washington, DC 20506

Stefanie Walker
swalker@neh.gov
202-606-8478
Mock Panel
Some common misconceptions about peer review

- The same panelist kills my application year after year.
- Only elite schools are funded because panelists come from elite schools (old boy’s network).
- Panelists don’t understand my field.
- Panelists don’t appreciate my past work.
- I don’t know anyone at NEH, so I will never get funded.
- My application won’t get funded because NEH doesn’t fund cutting-edge approaches or work in my field.
- I’m too junior to get funded.
- It’s too early in my project.
Rating Scale

- E  Excellent
- VG  Very good
- G  Good
- SM  Some merit
- NC  Not competitive