National Endowment for the Humanities Workshop

Catherine Spaur, Office of Research & Sponsored Programs
March 16, 2016
Topics

- Overview of NEH mission structure
- Grant Opportunities
- NEH Proposal Tips
- Review criteria
NEH Mission

• The National Endowment for the Humanities supports work that engages scholars and general public in humanistic inquiry, believing that understanding our world today requires understanding humanities. Their motto: exploring the human endeavor.
What are the humanities?

- NEH’s definition includes, but is not limited to, the study of: language, 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.
An array of funding

- Research grants for individuals and groups of collaborators;
- Education grants to support summer seminars and institutes to promote research and advanced training for teachers at the secondary and postsecondary levels;
- Preservation and access grants to conserve and make available important humanities collections;
- Public programs awards that support exhibitions and documentaries aimed at the general public;
- Opportunities in the digital humanities involving the application of technology to humanities topics; and,
- Challenge grants that provide matching funds for building and endowment projects
Collaborative Research Grants

• Support *interpretive humanities research* undertaken by two or more collaborating scholars, for full-time or part-time activities for 1-3 years.

• Support is available for salaries, consultants, and research assistants; project-related travel; field work; applications of information technology; and technical support and services.

• Eligible projects include
  • research that significantly adds to knowledge and understanding of the humanities
  • conferences on topics of major importance in the humanities that will benefit scholarly research

• Award ranges from $25,000-$100,000/year.
Digital Humanities Start-Up Grants

• Small grants to support the planning stages of digital projects:
  • creating or enhancing experimental, computationally-based methods or techniques for humanities research, teaching, preservation, or public programming;
  • pursuing scholarship that examines the history, criticism, and philosophy of digital culture and its impact on society, or explores the philosophical or practical implications and impact of digital humanities in specific fields or disciplines; or
  • revitalizing and/or recovering existing digital projects that promise to contribute substantively to scholarship, teaching, or public knowledge of the humanities.

• Grant up to 18 months ranging from $5,000-$75,000.
Landmarks of American History and Culture

- Supports a series of one-week residence-based workshops for K-12 educators. Workshops use historic sites to address central themes and issues in American history, government, literature, art, music, and related subjects.
- Increase knowledge and appreciation of subjects, ideas, and places significant to American history and culture through humanities reading and site study.
- Leading scholars should serve as lecturers or seminar leaders. Workshops should also enable participants to work with primary documents and develop a project.
Fellowship Programs at Independent Research Institutions (FPIRI) & Summer Programs

• FPIRI provide scholars with research time, a stimulating intellectual environment, and access to resources that might otherwise not be available to them.

• Each year, NEH offers tuition-free opportunities for university educators to study a variety of humanities topics. Stipends of $1,200-$3,900 help cover expenses for these one- to five-week programs.

• Faculty interested in these programs apply as individuals and not through the university.
NEH Summer Seminars and Institutes

• Support faculty development programs for school teachers and for college and university teachers. Programs may be 1-4 weeks.

• NEH Summer Seminars and Institutes:
  • Extend and deepen knowledge and understanding of the humanities by focusing on significant topics and texts;
  • Contribute to the intellectual vitality and professional development of participants;
  • Build communities of inquiry and provide models of civility and excellent scholarship and teaching; and
  • Link teaching and research in the humanities.
Summer Stipends

• Support individuals pursuing advanced research that is of value to humanities scholars and/or general audiences.
• Recipients usually produce articles, monographs, books, digital materials, translations, editions, or other scholarly resources.
• The award of $6,000 supports continuous full-time work on a humanities project for a period of two consecutive months.
• Summer Stipends support projects at any stage of development.
• Summer Stipends are awarded to individual scholars.
How do you know which one is right?

- Discuss your project with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
- Does your project fit the funding priorities?
- Is the timing right for you?
- Is the budget sufficient for your project?
- Do you have established collaborators?
- Prepare an outline of your project and connect with the Program Officer at NEH
CONTACTING PROGRAM OFFICERS

• NEH encourages contact with the relevant program officer for your grant throughout your application process. Note that contact with Program Officers for Fellowships and Summer Stipends is limited.

• Reasons to contact a NEH program officer:
  • Find out if your research topic "fits" a particular program
  • Ask for review of 1 page concept paper (at least 6 weeks before due date)
  • The PO can tell you generally what kinds of people are likely to be on the peer review panel.
General Application Tips

• Read the guidelines, FAQs, and sample proposals for the specific grant program.
• Focus. Do not over extend yourself and try to do more than realistic. Reviewers will question whether you can do it all and question what exactly you are proposing to do.
• The proposal will be read by generalists and specialists
• Do not antagonize the reviewer – limit the jargon, don’t squeeze in a tiny font and make it clear what you are doing.
• Explicitly address the criteria – the significance of this project is X. I will disseminate this research by x, y & z.
• Anticipate and answer possible concerns – why this and not that?
Review Criteria

- The intellectual significance of project for supporting scholarly research, education, or public programming in the humanities;
- The soundness of the proposed methodology;
- The viability, efficiency, and productivity of the project, as indicated by the work plan;
- The qualifications of the project’s staff;
- The quality of the project’s plans for disseminating information about and providing access to grant products;
- The reasonableness of the proposed budget in relation to anticipated results.
Project Significance

- For most NEH programs, the most important criterion is the project’s significance.
- Make a case for significance of project to the field and how it might contribute to other humanities fields.
- Locate your project in a larger scholarly context. Know the literature, issues, questions and controversies on your topic. If you reference theory, explain how it fits with your conceptual framework.
- How are you building on or challenging the work of scholars in your field?
- Are you taking this subject in a new direction, proposing a new interpretation or adapting new methodology?
Letters of recommendation

For applications that require letters of recommendation:

• Talk with your letter writers. The more they know about the project, the better they can be as advocates for your work.
• Letter writers should review your proposal in advance of writing the letter.
• Ask them to focus their letters on the project and its significance, rather than on you.
• If your project spans disciplines, get letters from those disciplines.
Review Panels

- In assembling a panel, Program officers select evaluators for their expertise in the relevant disciplines, topics, and areas, as well as their overall breadth of knowledge in the humanities.
- Typically assign 15 to 40 applications to a panel and select three to six evaluators per panel.
- It is important to note that no evaluator may serve in consecutive years for the same grant program or on more than two convening panels in any calendar year.
- NEH doesn’t have standing panels; all NEH panels are formed anew at the start of a grant competition.
Gain Grant Insight

• Universities across the country sponsor regional NEH workshops. Most of the workshops are held in late winter/early spring.

• Review previously funded proposals. For a list of awards go to the NEH funded projects database.

• Serve as a reviewer on an NEH panel. Gain insight into the review process, learn about rising issues in the humanities.

• If proposal is declined, request written comments from reviewers and resubmit.
Have Questions or Need Help?

- Go to our website at: [http://www.wcupa.edu/research/](http://www.wcupa.edu/research/)

- **CBPA, COE & CVPA** contact:
  Catherine Spaur, [cspaur@wcupa.edu](mailto:cspaur@wcupa.edu) or 610.436.3060

- **CAS, CHS** contact:
  Laura Vassallo, [lvassallo@wcupa.edu](mailto:lvassallo@wcupa.edu) or 610.430.5606