

ORDE "KNOW YOUR AGENCY" SERIES: NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES (NEH) – <http://www.neh.gov>

NEH OVERVIEW

In 1963, three organizations - the American Council of Learned Societies, the Council of Graduate Schools in America, and the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa - established the National Commission on the Humanities. This Commission was charged with conducting "a study of the state of the humanities in America", and it released its final report in 1964 outlining the imbalance of science versus the humanities throughout all levels of the American educational system. Its recommendation was creation of a federal National Humanities Foundation to act as a cultural mediator to the nation's growing dependence on, and investment in, science and technology. The federal government adopted the Commission's recommendation, creating the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as an independent federal agency in 1965. (NEH History website).

Specific Interests

Promoting excellence in the humanities and making lessons offered through humanities disciplines accessible to the American people are major goals of NEH. To reach these goals, NEH supports research, public programming, access, and educational outreach projects designed to ensure the humanities are relevant to Americans and our dialogue on democracy.

AGENCY ORGANIZATION

NEH is headed by a Chairman who is advised by the 26-member National Council on the Humanities. The Chairman and Council members are appointed by the President of the United States and confirmed by the US Senate. All Council members are humanities experts and most are drawn from academia. NEH has seven program divisions and offices that provide competitive funding through 39 funding programs. Divisions and programs supporting University researchers are the:

- Division of Research Programs
- Division of Preservation and Access Programs
- Division of Education Programs
- Division of Public Programs
- Office of Digital Humanities

Each Division sponsors a variety of funding programs to meet their mission. See the [ORDE Getting to Know NEH Website](#) for details on each program. You may also review all NEH programs at <http://www.neh.gov/grants>.

AGENCY GRANTS PROCESS

NEH supports workshops and conferences, public outreach efforts, preservation of humanities collections including digitization, humanities course and curriculum development, historic site interpretation and preservation, and research related to the humanities. Grants are primarily made to institutions – museums, colleges, universities, state humanities councils, and other non-profit organizations – although the prestigious NEH Fellowship Program provides direct stipend support to individuals. Citizenship criteria are applied only to grant programs for which individuals apply – all US citizens and foreign nationals who have lived in the US for at least three years prior to the application deadline are eligible.

NEH uses Grants.gov to announce funding opportunities and for grant application submission. Application guidelines, budget templates, application narratives from previously funded projects, and success rates for each funding program are available on the NEH website.

For Fiscal Year 2017 (the latest information available), NEH supported 871 projects totaling nearly \$111 million (NEH Annual Report, 2017, p. 3). Funding levels vary greatly by program, ranging from \$1,000 to \$750,000, with project lengths of two months to four years. Cost share requirements vary by program – some programs expect no cost share from applicants while other programs (especially humanities collections programs) have cost share expectations up to 50%.

Contact with Agency Program Staff

NEH strongly encourages investigators to begin working with their program officers at the early stages of the application process, well in advance of when application materials are available. NEH sets all application deadlines early in the fiscal year, allowing applicants to begin planning their projects and working with program officers by using the previous year's guidelines. Final program guidelines are usually issued 2 months in advance of a deadline. Some NEH

programs allow applicants to email a draft of their application for program officer review and comment; draft applications are due at least six weeks prior to the official application deadline. NEH reports that applicants who have taken advantage of this offer have found these staff reviews very helpful.

Typical Agency Proposal Process

- 1) PI determines suitability of proposed project to NEH mission and specific program requirements
- 2) PI contacts program officer for assistance in determining how best to meet the program mission and with specific questions about the application
- 3) Program officer assembles peer review panel
- 4) If allowed by NEH program, PI submits application draft for program officer review and comment 6 weeks prior to application deadline
- 5) Applications are submitted to Grants.gov
- 6) Peer review panel evaluates applications
- 7) NEH program officers recommend applications for funding based on peer reviewer evaluations and available funds
- 8) The National Humanities Council reviews recommended applications and forwards information to the NEH Chairman
- 9) NEH Chairman makes all final funding decisions, taking into account advice provided by review panels and program officers
- 10) Successful PI receives notification of award

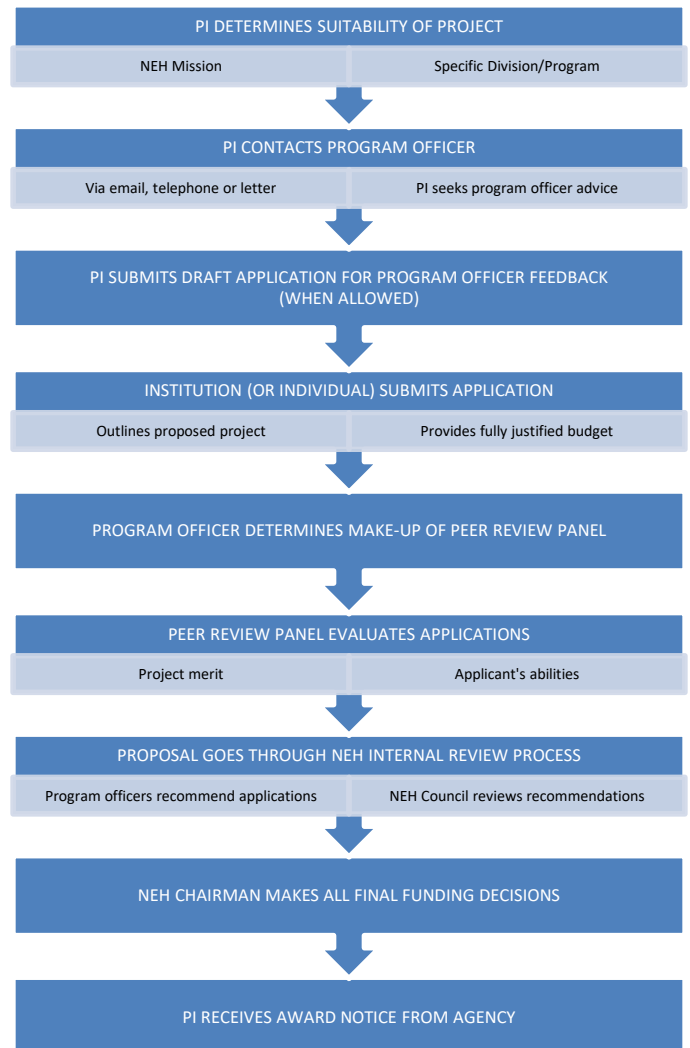
NEH Proposal Review Process

NEH uses a combination of peer and program officer review. There are no standing review panels; instead, panels are formed at the start of a grant competition and reviewer names are announced in the Federal Register. Peer reviewers are responsible for application evaluation, but do not rank proposals for funding. Based on peer reviewer evaluations and availability of funds, program officers recommend applications for funding to the NEH Council on the Humanities. The Council reviews recommended applications and then forwards to the NEH Chairman who makes all final funding decisions. Review criteria vary by program, but generally include project significance, methodology, project staff qualifications, outcomes of project, quality of dissemination plan and reasonability of budget.

What Happens Next?

Successful applicants move into project implementation, ultimately resulting in peer-reviewed articles, books, monographs, sustainable collections and other outcomes. Applications that have been turned down by NEH for funding may be resubmitted for consideration in a later competition; however, NEH treats all applications received as new. Before resubmission, applicants should review the evaluations provided by NEH and talk with program officers to gain a clearer vision of how to best meet the funding program's needs. Note that NEH does **not** automatically provide the peer review evaluations to PIs; rather, PIs must request them via email (specifics are found in each program's application guidelines).

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES PROPOSAL & REVIEW PROCESS



Also see the [ORDE Getting to Know the NEH](#) website for a more in-depth perspective on this agency.