NEH Application Tips Workshop
February 4, 2022

NEH Division of Research Programs
Claudia Kinkela and Madison Hendren
AGENDA

1. Overview of Programs
2. Strategies for Application Writing
3. Discussion of Sample Narratives
4. Questions
Disclaimer

The following slides were used to supplement a public oral presentation at the University of Oregon on February 4, 2022 for potential NEH applicants. They are not intended to provide complete information about the NEH’s programs and they do not constitute an official statement of NEH policy. For current information about NEH programs, including eligibility requirements and the dates of deadlines, please consult the guidelines posted on the NEH website at neh.gov.
THE HUMANITIES

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.

National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965
Challenge Grants
Digital Humanities
Education Programs
Federal/State Partnership
Preservation and Access
Public Programs
Research Programs
DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Director: Christopher Thornton

Supports scholars—individuals and collaborative teams—working on research projects that advance knowledge and understanding of the humanities.
Supports individual scholars pursuing projects that embody exceptional research, rigorous analysis, and clear writing.

Awards are made for periods from 6 to 12 months.

Awards are $5,000/month. The minimum award is $30,000; the maximum is $60,000.

Award periods must be continuous and full-time.

Deadline: April 13, 2022
Division of Research Programs

NEW THIS YEAR: FELLOWSHIPS

• Separate work plan attachment (1 page)
• No writing sample

Fellowships NOFO webinar:
12:30 PM Eastern
Wednesday, Feb. 16 (visit neh.gov/grants/research/fellowships)
Division of Research Programs

SUMMER STIPENDS

Supports continuous full-time work on a humanities project for a period of two consecutive months.

Requires institutional nomination, with some exceptions.

Awards are $6,000.

Award periods (2 months) must be continuous and full-time.

NEH funds may support recipients’ compensation, travel, and other costs related to the proposed scholarly research.

Deadline: September 21, 2022
Notice: Information on NEH and COVID-19: Read updates for NEH applicants and awardees.

New NEH Grant Awards Announced

$24.7 million will support 208 humanities projects across the country, from the creation of new digital and educational resources to infrastructure projects at cultural institutions.
NEH.gov/grants

- Search all programs by name or division
- Search funded projects by keyword, discipline, etc.
Fellowships

Division of Research Programs

NEH Fellowships are competitive awards granted to individual scholars pursuing projects that embody exceptional research, rigorous analysis, and clear writing. Applications must clearly articulate a project’s value to humanities scholars, general audiences, or both.

Fellowships provide recipients time to conduct research or to produce books, monographs, peer-reviewed articles, e-books, digital materials, translations with...
Step 1
Review your application package

Read the notice of funding opportunity to ensure you understand all the expectations and restrictions for projects delivered under this program and are prepared to write the most effective application.

Application Materials
Fellowships Notice of Funding Opportunity, 2022 and 2023 (PDF)
Fellowships Grants.gov application package

Program Resources
Fellowships Frequently Asked Questions, 2022 and 2023 (PDF)
List of recently funded Fellowships

Sample Application Narratives
The narrative samples below are not intended to serve as models, but to give applicants a sense of how a successful application might be crafted. Note that the format might have been changed since these applications were submitted. Follow the guidelines in the currently posted Notice of Funding.
APPLICATION WRITING TIPS
1. The intellectual significance of the proposed project, including its value to humanities scholars, general audiences, or both.

2. The quality of the conception, definition, organization, and description of the project and the applicant’s clarity of expression.

3. The feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed work plan.

4. The quality or promise of quality of the applicant as an interpreter of the humanities.

5. The likelihood that the applicant will complete the project (not necessarily during the period of performance), including, when relevant, the soundness of the dissemination and access plans.
The life of your application
[https://www.neh.gov/grants/application-process]

1. Submission
2. Panel sort
3. Review panels
4. Staff recommendations
5. National Council review
6. Chair’s decision
7. Award notification
Peer Review Panels (Fellowships)

- Applications are grouped by field
- Each set is assigned to 3 reviewers (tier 1)
- Each set is assigned to a 4-member panel (tier 2)
- Panelists are experts and generalists
- Panelists are recruited for regional and institutional diversity
- Panelists rate 25-35 applications
- We change panels each year. Panelists are not allowed to serve on panels in consecutive years.
Tips for Writing

Think of all the parts of the application as a unified argument for funding you.

- Make the narrative clear, convincing, and somehow intriguing.
- Your work plan, bibliography, and CV are important.
- For a dissertation revision, take special care with the work plans.
- Remember the time constraints of the panelists.
Tips for Writing

Be strategic

Start early

Discuss the application with your letter writers

Read applications for your institutions
Tips for Writing

Pay attention to details

- Proofread!
- Have a colleague read your application
- Check your bibliography
- Include required supporting materials
Tips for Writing

 Improve your chances of success

Serve as an NEH panelist

Get your reviewers’ comments

Panelists will only know you’re applying again if you tell them
Samples

1. Islamic Literacy in Early America: Muslim Sources of U.S. Authorship

2. The Memory of al-Andalus and Spanish Colonialism in Morocco (1859-1956)

3. Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition
Sample 1

• The details reinforce and complement the broader claims and interventions

• Parts of the narrative work together

• Subheadings make it easy for panelists to find information
Sample 1: Synopsis

• 1\textsuperscript{st} sentence includes brief description of the proposed book ("Uncovering Islam’s formative impact on the nation’s literature, \textit{Islamic Literacy in Early America}...traces covert genealogies of Arabic and Persian influence extending from Revolutionary beginnings to the Civil War.")

• 2\textsuperscript{nd} sentence clearly states the contribution of the proposed work ("...this monograph excavates the multi-lingual and cross-religious foundations of literary America, \textit{revising the received portraits of our most iconic authors, while also giving voice to unknown Muslim writings penned in the young republic."} )
Sample 1: Research and Contribution

Builds on the description in the synopsis without repeating by:

1. Situating the project in existing work (While Orientalism has long been recognized as vital to the nation’s origins, *Islamic Literacy in Early America* redirects our attention inward, revealing the private investments which underlie U.S. public interests.)

2. Clearly stating the argument and connecting it to the project’s intervention (“Amplifying the Arabic and Persian undertones hushed underneath U.S. literary life, I argue that Islamic traditions catalyze emergent American identities, serving as vehicles of liberation in artistry, religion, and politics.”)

3. Highlighting how approach to the sources contributes to overall significance (Merging academic fields and literary figures, *Islamic Literacy in Early America* re-centers the Muslim margins of U.S. authorial origins, discovering the reading and rendering of Arabic and Persian sources at the literary heart of discrete American lives.)
• In addition to clearly describing the organization of the book, the chapter outline identifies the central figures in terms of their importance for American literary history, the sources that attest to their Islamic literacy, and the main argument the author will make based on those sources in each chapter.

• Outcomes of the grant period are clearly stated and application gives an indication of how time will be divided.

• The dissemination plan mentions a potential press, which reinforces the outcomes proposed in the work plan

• Applicant indicates relationship of current project to previous research
Sample 2

• Also strikes a balance between details and broad claims, but spends more time “setting the stage” before introducing the argument.

• Defines specialized terms (al-Andalus, *convivencia*), gives dates for wars, lifespans, publications, etc.

• Gives representative examples to support claims and illustrate arguments (cites 2011 Moroccan constitution to support claim that Morocco and Spain have “cast themselves as direct descendants of al-Andalus.”)

• Explains how the current project moves beyond the dissertation in terms of content and intellectual contribution.

• Not overly reliant on “gap-filling”
Sample 3

• Detailed workplan

• Breaks down award period into 6-8 week chunks
Help and available resources

1. An NEH program is always available by telephone or email.
2. We read draft applications in many, but not all, programs.
3. We provide sample applications on our website.
4. We hold webinars and post how-to videos.
5. NEH blog highlights funded projects.
6. We provide all applicants with reviewer comments.
Claudia Kinkela, Sr. Program Officer, Division of Research Programs
ckinkela@neh.gov (202) 606-8203

Madison Hendren, Program Officer, Division of Research Programs
mhendren@neh.gov (202) 770-4989