

**Society of American Archivists
Committee on Public Policy**

**Reference Document on the
National Endowment for the Humanities**

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BACKGROUND

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is an independent federal agency created in 1965. It is one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the United States.

The Endowment is directed by a chairman who is appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate for a term of four years. Advising the chairman is the National Council on the Humanities, a board of 26 distinguished private citizens who are also appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. The National Council Members serve staggered six-year terms. NEH comprises seven program division and offices and several administrative offices. NEH also supports and works closely with the humanities councils in each state and territory. The Office of Congressional Affairs serves as the Endowment's liaison with Members of Congress and their staffs in D.C., state, and district offices. Its mission is to articulate how federal funding appropriated through Congress to NEH impacts constituents in every state, Congressional district and territory of the United States of America.

On September 29, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act into law. The act called for the creation of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) as separate, independent agencies. The Washington Post called the creation of the endowments "a momentous step."

The bill was the culmination of a movement calling for the federal government to invest in culture, just as it had with science. As Glenn Seaborg, the head of the Atomic Energy Commission, told a Senate committee: "We cannot afford to drift physically, morally, or esthetically in a world in which the current moves so rapidly perhaps toward an abyss.

Science and technology are providing us with the means to travel swiftly. But what course do we take? This is the question that no computer can answer."

The groundswell that led to the bill began in 1963, when three scholarly and educational organizations -- the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the Council of Graduate Schools in America, and the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa -- joined together to establish the National Commission on the Humanities. They instructed the commission to conduct a study of the "the state of the humanities in America." In June 1964, the commission released its report. It found that the emphasis placed on science endangered the study of the humanities from elementary schools through postgraduate programs. In order to correct the balance, it recommended "the establishment by the President and the Congress of the United States of a National Humanities Foundation."

Politicians in Washington heeded the commission's advice. In August 1964, Congressman William Moorhead of Pennsylvania proposed legislation to implement the commission's recommendations. Support from the White House followed in September, when President Johnson lent his endorsement during a speech at Brown University.

In March 1965, the White House took the lead on the issue, proposing the establishment the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities and requesting \$20 million in start up funds. The commission's report had generated other proposals, but the White House's comprehensive approach eclipsed them. It called not only for a the creation of two separate agencies -- one devoted to arts and one devoted to humanities -- but also for each agency to be advised by a governing body comprised of leaders in their field.

Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island and Representative Frank Thompson, Jr., of New Jersey introduced the bill to their respective Houses, where they immediately found co-sponsors. Pell told reporters that that bill represented "the first time in our history" that "a President of the United States has given his administration support to such a comprehensive measure which combines the two areas most significant to our nation's cultural advancement and to the full growth of a truly great society." In mid-September 1965, Congress passed the bill.

Selections from the NEH Timeline (<https://www.neh.gov/about/history/timeline>):

In 1981, President Reagan established a Presidential Task Force on the Arts and the Humanities and charged it with "developing ideas to stimulate increased private giving for cultural activities." The Task Force recommended continuing the existing NEH and NEA structures. In 1986, President Reagan proclaimed the week of February 9-15 as National Humanities Week in honor of the Endowment's twentieth anniversary.

In 1997, President Clinton presented the first National Humanities Medals.

In a 2002 ceremony, President George W. Bush launched *We the People*, an NEH initiative to encourage the teaching, studying, and understanding of American history and culture. In 2005, NEH began a year-long celebration of the agency's 40th anniversary with a program at the National Gallery of Art. Vice President Richard B. Cheney and Lynne V. Cheney attend the event and provide brief remarks to the estimated 500 dignitaries, donors, and cultural leaders and supporters assembled at the Gallery.

In 2014, current NEH Chairman William D. Adams was nominated by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the Senate.

In 2015, in honor of its 50th anniversary, the NEH launched Common Good, an initiative for the Humanities designed to demonstrate the critical role humanities scholarship can play in our public life.

Founding legislation: National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-209):
<https://www.neh.gov/about/history/national-foundation-arts-and-humanities-act-1965-pl-89-209>

Digital repository: <https://www.neh.gov/content/neh-digital-repository>

MISSION

Because democracy demands wisdom, NEH serves and strengthens our republic by promoting excellence in the humanities and conveying the lessons of history to all Americans. The Endowment accomplishes this mission by awarding grants for top-rated proposals examined by panels of independent, external reviewers.

NEH grants typically go to cultural institutions, such as museums, archives, libraries, colleges, universities, public television, and radio stations, and to individual scholars. The grants:

- strengthen teaching and learning in schools and colleges
- facilitate research and original scholarship
- provide opportunities for lifelong learning
- preserve and provide access to cultural and educational resources
- strengthen the institutional base of the humanities

Since 1965, the Endowment has opened new worlds of learning for the American public with noteworthy projects such as:

- Seven thousand books, 16 of which have won Pulitzer Prizes, and 20 of which have received the Bancroft Prize.
- *The Civil War*, the landmark documentary by Ken Burns viewed by 38 million Americans
- The Library of America editions of novels, essays, and poems celebrating America's literary heritage
- The United States Newspaper Project, which cataloged and microfilmed 63.3 million pages of historic newspapers, paved the way for the National Digital Newspaper Program and its digital repository, *Chronicling America*
- Annual support for 56 states and territories to help support some 56,000 lectures, discussions, exhibitions and other programs each year

What are the humanities?

"The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study and interpretation 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, 1965, as amended

NEH Impact Reports on Reaching Rural Communities, Preserving Native American History, Youth, and Supporting Veterans: https://www.neh.gov/about/chairman/congressional-affairs?quicktabs_oga_blocks=2#quicktabs-oga_blocks

National Council on the Humanities: <https://www.neh.gov/about/national-council-on-the-humanities>

NEH Office of Congressional Affairs: <https://www.neh.gov/about/chairman/congressional-affairs>

State Humanities Councils: <https://www.neh.gov/about/state-humanities-councils>

Strategic Plan (FY 2013 - FY 2017)

Mission Statement: The National Endowment for the Humanities serves and strengthens our nation by supporting high quality projects and programs in the humanities and by making the humanities available to all Americans.

Goal 1: To Advance Knowledge and Understanding of the Humanities in the United States

Objective 1: Facilitate basic research and original scholarship in the humanities.

Objective 2: Strengthen teaching and learning in the humanities in elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

Objective 3: Preserve and increase access to cultural heritage resources that constitute the cultural and intellectual patrimony of the American people and that are important to research, education, and public understanding of the humanities.

Objective 4: Provide opportunities for American citizens of all ages and wherever located to engage in lifelong learning in the humanities.

Objective 5: Maintain and strengthen partnerships with the state humanities councils.

Objective 6: Provide a focal point for development of the digital humanities.

Objective 7: Strengthen the institutional base of the humanities through financial incentives provided by matching challenge grants.

Objective 8: Stimulate third-party support for humanities projects and programs.

Goal 2: To Provide National Leadership in Promoting the Humanities in American Life

Objective 1: Broaden awareness of, access to, and support for the humanities.

Objective 2: Collect, analyze, and disseminate information about the state of the humanities in the United States.

Objective 3: Develop and maintain partnerships with individuals, organizations, and institutions in support of the humanities.

Goal 3: To Enhance Quality of Service and Efficiency of Operations

Objective 1: Provide effective and results-oriented service to the American people.

Objective 2: Recruit and retain a highly qualified, diverse, and results-oriented work force.

<https://www.neh.gov/about/legal/strategic-plan>

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens." (National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965)

"The humanities belong to all the people of the United States." (National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965, as amended)

"It is a powerful indicator of NEH's success that it has been able to engage so many domains and dimensions of humanities work—popular and scholarly, individual and institutional, contemporary and historical, conceptual and material—and to see these poles come together, often in a dramatic way. The most significant result of this work is the steady growth of the cultural capital of the United States. NEH has had many partners in this endeavor, including the state humanities councils established in every state and territory, local and state governments, private foundations, and generous individuals. But without the Endowment's leadership, commitment to the cultivation of the entire nation's cultural capacity, and focus on broad access to humanities resources for all Americans, our citizens' understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage would be significantly diminished. The cultural economy is hugely important to the economic health of thousands of communities around the country, and it is likely to matter more and more as the

economic base of the United States continues to shift away from manufacturing to education, healthcare, human services, and information technology.” (NEH Appropriations Request for Fiscal year 2017)

BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS

FY2017 Budget Request: https://www.neh.gov/files/fy_2017_congr_budget.pdf

2015 and 2016 Appropriations and 2017 Request:

NEH Division/Office	2015 Appropriation	2016 Appropriation	2017 Request
The Common Good	--	5,500,000	10,190,000
Bridging Cultures: Special Initiative	3,500,000	--	--
Education Programs	13,265,000	13,040,000	12,000,000
Federal/State Partnership	42,528,000	43,040,000	43,040,000
Preservation and Access	15,460,000	15,200,000	14,385,000
Public Programs	13,684,000	13,454,000	12,730,000
Research Programs	14,784,000	14,536,000	13,755,000
Office of Digital Humanities	4,400,000	4,480,000	4,600,000
Program Development	500,000	500,000	500,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>108,121,000</i>	<i>109,750,000</i>	<i>111,200,000</i>
Challenge Grants	8,500,000	8,500,000	8,500,000
Treasury Funds	2,400,000	2,400,000	2,200,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>10,900,000</i>	<i>10,900,000</i>	<i>10,700,000</i>
Administration	27,000,000	27,292,000	27,948,000
Total	146,021,000	147,942,000	149,848,000

GRANTS OVERVIEW

The NEH offers 41 grant opportunities, administered by 8 divisions and offices that work with prospective applicants, recruit and oversee peer-review panels, provide analysis of panel results to members of the National Council on the Humanities and the agency’s senior staff, conduct site visits of projects that have received NEH support, and represent NEH at regional, national, and international conferences in the humanities.

The review process stands at the center of NEH’s work. Annually, the Endowment conducts more than 200 review panels, involving nearly 1,000 outside experts, in its evaluation of approximately 5,700 applications across 40 grant programs. The Endowment recruits panelists from every state, drawing on a wide and diverse pool of scholars and other humanities

experts. In a fiscal year, NEH will make about 900 grants in amounts ranging from \$1,000 to approximately \$750,000. In most programs, the applicant success rate varies from about 6 percent to 40 percent; the funding ratio across all grant programs is approximately 16 percent. About 35 program officers, most of whom hold an advanced degree in a humanities or related field, manage the process.

Grants: <https://www.neh.gov/grants>

Awards for Faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions
Awards for Faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities
Awards for Faculty at Tribal Colleges and Universities
Collaborative Research Grants
Common Heritage
Creating Humanities Communities
Dialogues on the Experience of War
Digging Into Data Challenge
Digital Humanities Advancement Grants
Digital Projects for the Public
Documenting Endangered Languages
Fellowship Programs at Independent Research Institutions
Fellowships
Fellowships for Advanced Social Science Research on Japan
Humanities Access Grants
Humanities Collections and Reference Resources
Humanities Connections
Humanities Initiatives at Community Colleges
Humanities Initiatives at Hispanic-Serving Institutions
Humanities Initiatives at Historically Black Colleges and Universities
Humanities Initiatives at Tribal Colleges and Universities
Humanities Open Book Program
Institutes for Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities
Landmarks of American History and Culture: Workshops for School Teachers
Media Projects: Development Grants
Media Projects: Production Grants
National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards
National Digital Newspaper Program
NEH-Mellon Fellowships for Digital Publication
Next Generation Humanities PhD Implementation Grants
Next Generation Humanities PhD Planning Grants
Preservation and Access Education and Training
Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions
Public Humanities Projects
Public Scholar Program
Research and Development
Scholarly Editions and Translations Grants
State Humanities Councils General Operating Support Grants
Summer Seminars and Institutes
Summer Stipends
Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections

Divisions and Offices: <https://www.neh.gov/divisions>

Division of Education

Division of Preservation and Access

Division of Public Programs

Division of Research

Office of Challenge Grants

Office of Digital Humanities

Office of Federal/State Partnership

Bridging Cultures

PROJECTS

In addition to 41 grant programs, the NEH spearheads the following special projects:

EDSITEment!

EDSITEment offers a treasure trove for teachers, students, and parents searching for high-quality material on the Internet in the subject areas of literature and language arts, foreign languages, art and culture, and history and social studies. All websites linked to EDSITEment have been reviewed for content, design, and educational impact in the classroom. They cover a wide range of humanities subjects, from American history to literature, world history and culture, language, art, and archaeology, and have been judged by humanities specialists to be of high intellectual quality.

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/>

Common Good

The Common Good is an initiative designed to demonstrate the critical role humanities scholarship can play in our public life. The NEH's enabling legislation speaks eloquently of the need to attend to "the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life." As our country grapples with both remarkable opportunities and extraordinary challenges, the "conditions of our national life" suggest that this need is greater than ever. Through NEH's traditional grant-making programs and several special initiatives, The Common Good encourages humanities scholars to turn their attention to topics that have widespread resonance with the American people and that lend themselves to the methods and concerns of the humanities.

<https://www.neh.gov/commongood>

Chronicling America

Chronicling America is a Website providing access to information about historic newspapers and select digitized newspaper pages, and is produced by the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP). NDNP, a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Library of Congress (LC), is a long-term effort to develop an Internet-based, searchable database of U.S. newspapers with descriptive information and select digitization of historic pages. Pages available as of 2/25/2017: 11,650,693

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

Created Equal

Created Equal: America's Civil Rights Struggle brings four outstanding films on the long civil rights movement to communities across the United States. As part of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)'s Bridging Cultures initiative, Created Equal will encourage communities across the country to revisit the history of civil rights in America and to reflect on the ideals of freedom and equality that have helped bridge deep racial and cultural divides in our civic life.

<http://createdequal.neh.gov/>

PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

NEH's Office of Inspector General was established on April 9, 1989, in accordance with the Inspector General Act Amendments of 1988, Public Law 100-504. NEH Office of Inspector General is responsible for (1) conducting audits and investigations; (2) reviewing legislation; (3) recommending policies to promote efficiency and effectiveness; and (4) preventing and detecting fraud, waste, and abuse in the operations of the agency. The Inspector General (IG) is also responsible for keeping the NEH chairman and Congress informed of problems or deficiencies in NEH's programs and operations. NEH's Inspector General is appointed by the NEH Chairman and reports directly to him.

<https://www.neh.gov/about/oig>

NEH's Budget, Planning, and Performance Results: <https://www.neh.gov/about/legal/reports>

OIG Audit, Review/Inspection Reports: <https://www.neh.gov/about/oig/reviews>

Semi-Annual Reports to Congress: <https://www.neh.gov/about/oig/semi-annual-reports>

Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality, Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated by the National Endowment for the Humanities: <https://www.neh.gov/about/guidelines-for-information-disseminated-by-national-endowment-for-humanities>

DATA & RESOURCES

NEH Open Government resources: <https://www.neh.gov/about/legal/open-government>

High-value datasets from NEH: NEH now has data in XML format about every grant made by the agency since our founding in 1965. We also have information about every evaluator and panelist from 1988 – the present. The data can be found on the NEH page on the Data.gov portal: <http://catalog.data.gov/organization/neh-gov>. It can also be downloaded directly from the NEH: <https://securegrants.neh.gov/open/data/>

NEH Funded Query Web API: <https://securegrants.neh.gov/publicquery/api.pdf>

The NEH Funded Project Query allows you to search for any grant ever made by the agency.

GRANT EXAMPLES

Example projects:

<https://50.neh.gov/>

<https://www.neh.gov/explore>

Selected examples:

Digital Public Library of America Digital Hubs Pilot - Digital Public Library of America, Inc., Boston, MA (2012-2016)
Award: \$1,250,000 (approved)

The incorporation and launch of the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), a groundbreaking project that seeks to digitize and bring together the contents of our nation's libraries and archives, and make them freely available to all online. Project activities to be completed during the grant period will include the creation of four state or regional "service hubs," each responsible for developing a standard set of services to local organizations, and meetings with both service hubs and existing large-scale "content hubs" to formulate content provider agreements.

<https://50.neh.gov/projects/americas-digital-library>

National History Day - College Park, MD (2015-2018)

Award: \$243,000 (approved)

A cooperative agreement with National History Day to continue support for the Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest and related activities. Since 1979, NEH has awarded \$1,926,563 to NHD. Cited for instilling “a passion for history,” National History Day was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Obama in February 2012.

<https://50.neh.gov/projects/national-history-day>

Photogrammar Project - Yale University, New Haven, CT (2011-2015)

Award: \$49,982 (approved)

Development of a website that would offer new ways of organizing, searching, and visualizing the archive of 160,000 photographs produced by the Farm Security Administration and Office of War Information (FSA-OWI) from 1935 to 1943. The Photogrammar Project is a Yale University Public Humanities Project designed to offer an interactive web-based open source visualization platform for the one-hundred and sixty thousand photographs created by the federal government from 1935 to 1943 under the Farm Securities Administration and Office of War Information (FSA-OWI). The images offer an archive of American life that is a resource for students, academics, and the public at large. The interactive map will map the one-hundred and sixty thousand photographs over historical county and census data. Additionally, users will be given the tools to be able to construct statistical graphics and visualization from the data. For example, a user will be able to quickly plot the percentage of military images collected by month and location or see a gallery of share cropping images created in Georgia. The Photogrammar Project, all accompanying code and detailed documentation will be available to the public at large.

<https://www.neh.gov/explore/photogrammar-project>

The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project - George Washington University, Washington, DC (2015-2016)

Award: \$103,900 (approved)

An Initiative to Digitize and Disseminate Significant Portions of Eleanor Roosevelt's Audiovisual Legacy. First Lady, diplomat, and citizen activist, Eleanor Roosevelt also wrote more than 8,000 columns, 580 articles, 27 books, and 100,000 letters. Preparation of an electronic edition of the 390 extant sound and moving image recordings made by Eleanor Roosevelt as a public affairs commentator and nationally syndicated broadcast journalist.

<https://www.neh.gov/explore/the-eleanor-roosevelt-papers-project>

The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross - WNET, New York, NY (2011-2014)

Award: \$250,000 (approved)

Scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. recounts the full trajectory of African-American history in his groundbreaking six-part series that takes viewers across five hundred years and two continents to shed new light on the experience of being an African American. Grant funded production costs of an eight-part series chronicling the African American experience from the early 1500s to the present.

<https://www.neh.gov/explore/the-african-americans-many-rivers-cross>

Credo - University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Amherst, MA (2010-2013)

Award: \$314,787 (approved)

W.E.B. Du Bois' prose poem “Credo” proclaimed his philosophy of racial equality. Read the personal correspondence and writings of this intellectual leader and founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in this online archive of Du Bois' papers. Grant funded the digitization of 169 linear feet of text and image materials on the life of African American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois, one of the most influential African American intellectuals and activists of the twentieth century. Begun in April 2009 with a grant from the Verizon Foundation, this project will provide free and unfettered online access to a large and extraordinarily diverse manuscript collection, one of the most important in the nation for study of twentieth century African American history and the origins of the modern Civil Rights movement. Access to the digital collections will be provided through an online repository hosted by the

W.E.B. Du Bois Library at UMass Amherst. Built on Fedora-Repository, the open source software, this archive will be made available at no charge to anyone with a connection to the world wide web, and the content will be also made available to secondary school educators through Verizon's Thinkfinity website.

<https://www.neh.gov/explore/credo>

The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. - Stanford University, Stanford, CA (2015-2018)

Award: \$350,000 (approved)

This definitive edition of Dr. King's most significant speeches, sermons, correspondence, public statements, published writings and unpublished manuscripts documents King's family roots, his rise to prominence, and influence as a national spokesperson for civil rights. Preparation for publication of volumes VIII and IX of the papers of American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), covering the years 1962-1964. To support the publication of fourteen volumes of "The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.," a definitive edition of King's most historically significant correspondence, sermons, speeches, published writings, and unpublished manuscripts.

<https://www.neh.gov/explore/the-papers-martin-luther-king-jr>

What's On The Menu? - New York Public Library, New York, NY (2011-2012)

Award: \$50,000 (approved)

Crowdsourcing Culinary History at The New York Public Library. The development of a prototype interface for a tool that would allow scholars and interested members of the general public to contribute to transcription materials related to culinary history, using the menu collection of the New York Public Library as a testbed. The New York Public Library (NYPL) seeks funding from NEH to build an online platform called "What's on the Menu" that will build capacity for crowdsource transcription of its unique collection of historic restaurant menus. With approximately 40,000 menus dating from the 1840s to the present, NYPL's collection is one of the largest of its kind in the world, used by historians, novelists, food writers, and general food enthusiasts. These menus are cultural artifacts and ephemera beyond simple descriptions of food; they provide insights on matters as diverse as politics, neighborhood development, and the evolution of graphic design. The planned menus database, which will store keyword-searchable structured information like restaurant location, dish-level descriptions, and food prices, will enable researchers, authors, culinary and other historians to track ingredients, dishes, prices, fads, and food vernacular through history, opening up new possibilities for discovering who we were through what we ate.

<https://www.neh.gov/explore/whats-the-menu>

Pop-Up Archive - Kitchen Sisters Productions, San Francisco, CA (2013-2014)

Award: \$60,000 (approved)

Pop Up Archive: Standardized Preservation and Distribution of Culturally Significant Audio. The development of open-source software tools and educational materials to facilitate the dissemination and long-term preservation of oral histories, radio broadcasts, and other audio content. Pop Up Archive is a simple system to preserve audio content by making it searchable, reusable, and shareable in ways that are meaningful to scholars and producers. The Kitchen Sisters inspired and collaborated on the initial phase of the project, which entailed an academic survey of existing methods for storage of and access to audio content, as well as the alpha release of software plug-ins for Omeka. Phase two of the project, for which we are seeking a Level II Start-Up Grant, will finalize and test these plug-ins across public media organizations and oral history archives, create a centralized repository of audio records, and educate relevant communities through a shared web space. The system will be open source and will conform to national archival standards, without requiring technical expertise from participating organizations. For the first time, content can be indexed for safe and permanent preservation and made accessible to producers, scholars, students, and the public.

<https://www.neh.gov/explore/pop-archive>