



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE  
HUMANITIES

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF INFORMATION  
OFFICER

1100 PENNSYLVANIA AVE., NW  
ROOM 203  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506  
(202) 606-8401 (PHONE)  
(202) 606-8216 (FAX)  
WWW.NEH.GOV

DATE: October 20, 2006

TO: Allison Zaleski, Office of Management and Budget  
FROM: Brett Bobley, Chief Information Officer  
SUBJECT: FY2006 E-Government Act Report

### **1. Brief Overview of Our Agency's Implementation of the Act**

During FY06, The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) created a special template for conducting Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs). As per the Act, this template was used during FY06 to conduct PIAs on all three of our major IT systems. This assessment was helpful to the agency in making privacy-related improvements to our systems and guided us in the creation of new privacy-related policies.

The agency is using E-Government initiatives to improve our operations in numerous ways. One good example is our increased use of Online Reviews. During FY05, our agency received 4943 grant applications, all of which had to go through peer review. In the past, this peer review meant that the NEH had to pay to photocopy and mail voluminous grant materials to the reviewers. By posting materials on a secure website, we can allow reviewers to read and evaluate grant applications without the cost of photocopying, handling, and mailing.

During FY05, 3972 of our 4943 applications were reviewed via the web. Some of these serve as a pre-review in advance of a sitting panel being formed for in-person discussions. In other cases, the web review has completely replaced a mailout review. Of the 3972 reviews, approximately 1000 of them were conducted solely online. If we estimate that the cost of copying, handling, and mailing the materials would be about \$10.00 per package to 78 reviewers, this represents a cost savings of \$780.00.

E-Gov isn't strictly about cost savings, though. It is also about process improvement. By allowing our reviewers to read and evaluate grant applications on the web in advance of a sitting panel, they can become more familiar with the contents and ultimately do a more thorough job of correctly evaluating their merit. We feel this leads to better choices when it comes to making grants, which is in line with our agency's strategic goals.

We also feel that this system is easier for our customers as well as our staff. For our staff, they no longer have to manually input thousands of grades into our backend system. Instead, the grades are entered by the reviewers on our website and can be batch imported. This saves time and adds accuracy. It is also easier for our reviewers. We

work closely with them to improve the system and make it easy to use. For example, here is an excerpt from a note one of our reviewers sent to us after using our Online Review system:

Just for the record-- Overall, I found the system you have put in place to be very effective. From start to finish, I felt everything was handled really well. Your initial inquiry about availability gave me a good heads-up that I might be called on. Then, the proposals were received with plenty of time allowed to read them and get the reviews submitted. All the instructions and guidelines that I received either in the packet or online were excellent and very helpful-- I referred to them several times for clarification of policies and issues during the review process. The upload process for submitting the reviews went without a hitch, even using a dial-up connection from home on a weekend. I was able to create all the reviews in a word processor ahead of time, then simply cut and paste text into the online form, click "Save," and go on to the next review. The interface for submitting the reviews was very clear and easy to understand and behaved as expected.

Logging in with the user name and supplied password was a cinch. It's a great system.

All in all, I got a lot personally out of reviewing these proposals. I was impressed with the number of proposals I considered excellent, and was inspired by the clarity and effectiveness of the writing in some of them. [...]

Thanks again for inviting me to participate. I hope the reviews will be helpful in the award process, and I look forward to working with the NEH more in the future.

As part of this initiative, our goal is to have reviewers access and evaluate our applications via the Internet. However, for those reviewers who are not able to use the Internet due to a disability or lack of access, we still have the option available to mail them the printed materials.

## **2. Brief Description of Our Process for Determining Which Information the Agency Intends to Make Available on the web**

Priority 1, as required by law, regulation, Presidential directive, or other official directive or national security:

- Agency reports and plans including strategic plans, customer service plans, annual and performance Reports, performance and accountability reports, FAIR Act reports, and NOFEAR Act Reports
- Privacy and accessibility notices
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) reading room
- Links to Firstgov.gov, Grants.gov, and other required destinations

Priority 2, mission-critical and essential for program operations but not required by law, regulation, or Presidential directive (i.e.: information or services tied directly to NEH's mission and/or strategic plan):

- Guidelines for applying for grants
- Information about using Grants.gov
- Information about managing a grant

- Information about major initiatives
- Grants announcements and project reports
- Job vacancy announcements

Priority 3, frequently requested information or services that would improve organization business processes and/or customer service to the public:

- Orientation to information and services
- Publications, including *Humanities* magazine
- Special features highlighting grants awarded by NEH
- Forms and other "contact us" methods facilitating public requests for information and services
- Press releases and press kits

Priority 4, other information:

- Resources intended to supplement or further explain information already available on the Web site
- Site maps and other Web site navigational aids

All content noted above currently exists on the agency's Web site.

Information is posted to our Web site as soon as it is ready, unless a deadline applies in which case the information is posted on or before the deadline.

Members of the public who have comments about NEH's Web site are encouraged to contact the agency.

Our posting priorities can be found at: <http://www.neh.gov/postingpriorities.html>

NEH uses First.gov as its search engine. All files on NEH's Web site can be searched.

### **3. Brief Description of how our agency's information dissemination activities are coordinated with its FOIA operations**

As set forth in greater detail above in our response to Question 2, NEH utilizes four priorities to determine what agency information will be made available electronically to the public. The electronic information available in the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) reading room on the NEH website is in Priority 1 for information to be disclosed by the agency.

FOIA and FOIA requests submitted to the NEH are handled by the NEH Office of the General Counsel. The Office of the General Counsel works with other offices in the agency to ensure that materials related to FOIA and frequently requested by FOIA requestors is made available for dissemination electronically on the agency website consistent with its' Priority 1 status.

Consistent with the direction of Executive Order 13,392 and as set forth in greater detail in the NEH FOIA Plan, the agency is working to proactively and affirmatively improve the disclosure of FOIA-related information to the general public. While NEH currently publishes and makes available to the general public a wide variety of information and agency records both on the NEH website and also in hardcopy, the agency also has determined that it should increase electronic disclosure of information and agency records.

Further, after reviewing NEH's use of the agency website for the FOIA program, NEH determined that many current FOIA requests could be satisfied in a more efficient manner by increasing the number and types of information and agency records available on the website and by improving the FOIA section on the website. To that end, the following information can now be reached from the FOIA reading room: NEH Statute and Regulations; Listing of NEH Grant Programs and Deadlines; NEH Grant Programs and Deadlines by Division; Sample Grant Application Narratives; General Terms and Conditions for Awards to Organizations; General Terms and Conditions for Awards to Individuals; Recent NEH Grant Awards; NEH Chairman's Biography; National Council Members' Biographies; State Humanities Councils; We the People Initiative; Press Releases; NEH Strategic Plan; Summary of Fiscal Year 2007 Budget Request; *Humanities* Magazine ; Staff Directory; Job Opportunities; and NEH Credit Card Holders.

Consistent with Sections 207(d) and (e) of E-Government Act of 2002, we work through both our information dissemination activities and FOIA program to ensure that information to be disclosed to the public is appropriately categorized and made available to the public electronically on the NEH website.

Our Information Resources Management (IRM) Strategic Plan can be found at:  
<http://www.neh.gov/howeare/cio.html>

Our FOIA Improvement Plan can be found at:  
<http://www.neh.gov/howeare/foiamain.html>