



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

OFFICE OF **DIGITAL HUMANITIES**

DIGITAL HUMANITIES

IMPLEMENTATION

GRANTS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What do you mean by innovation?

An innovative project creates something new, offering an interesting new approach to tackling a problem. Innovation can take many forms. Some projects are examples of technical innovation, such as the creation of a new piece of software to address a need in the humanities. In other cases, the innovation does not consist of creating new technology; instead the project makes use of an existing technology in a new way. For example, an applicant might take existing software used for some other purpose and demonstrate how it could be effectively used for humanities research. In still other cases, the innovation does not pertain to the technology per se; instead it is the project collaboration that is innovative, as with projects that bring together creative individuals from both technical and nontechnical fields to address a longstanding humanities issue in a new way. True innovation is rare, and reasonable people can disagree as to what constitutes innovation. The applicant therefore needs to make a strong case for the innovative character of the proposed project.

Who will read my grant application?

A variety of individuals will read your application, including peer reviewers, NEH staff, and members of the NEH National Council on the Humanities.

We therefore strongly emphasize that you should write your application so that readers without technical knowledge can understand it. We realize that your project may be technical in nature and that part of the application may have to address complex technological issues. But particularly in your abstract, statement of innovation, statement of humanities significance, and the first portion of your narrative, you should write for a general audience that is familiar with the humanities, but may have no specific knowledge of technology or of your project's relation to

the humanities. In these sections of the application you should make a “big picture” case for your project’s contribution to the humanities.

Your proposal must explain the significance of your project to the humanities, in terms that will be comprehensible to readers without technical knowledge. Your application will be read by many individuals with different backgrounds, from different disciplines, with varying degrees of familiarity with the methodologies used in digital scholarship. You must therefore make a case to this broad audience. Consider, for example, how you might make a case for your project if you were describing it to your provost, dean, or college president. Alternatively, consider how you might briefly describe the project to a new acquaintance outside your field. Your abstract, statement of innovation, statement of humanities significance, and narrative should be crafted to appeal to individuals like these.

May my institution apply for more than one Digital Humanities Implementation Grant at a time?

Yes. Institutions may apply for and hold more than one of these grants, but project directors may submit only one application to this program at a time.

I already have an NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant (SUG). I would like to apply for a Digital Humanities Implementation Grant (DHIG) as a follow-up to my current grant. However, at the time of the DHIG deadline, my SUG won’t yet be fully completed. May I still apply?

NEH is actively encouraging SUG project directors to subsequently apply for a DHIG, even if the SUG is not fully completed when the project director applies to DHIG. That said, evidence of the success of your earlier work is an important part of the DHIG review process. Thus one of the review criteria is “whether the project would be ready to be implemented by the close of the [DHIG] grant period.” Hence you should demonstrate that you have made enough progress in the start-up phase of your project to be ready to apply for a DHIG.

I would like to send a draft proposal for NEH staff comment. How do I do that?

While it is not mandatory to submit a draft, applicants are encouraged to do so. In order to guarantee NEH review of the draft, it should reach NEH at least six weeks before the deadline. Draft proposals should be submitted via e-mail to odh@neh.gov.

Should the project participants and our institution include letters of commitment as part of our application or should they be sent separately?

Letters of commitment should be included with the application.

Whom should I ask to provide letters of support?

Letters of support should come from persons who can objectively assess the importance of the project to the humanities. These persons should comment on the importance of the project's subject area, the proposed methods, or the technical plan. They should not be project participants. Also, the letters should be sent to the project director (not separately to NEH) and submitted with the application.

On the Supplementary Cover Sheet for NEH Grant Programs, question number 1 asks for the project director's major field of study. Our project director's field of study is not, however, listed in the drop-down menu. What should we choose?

If none of the listed fields seems to fit your project director's major field of study, please choose "Interdisciplinary."