



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

Application Tips

Prepare

- Look at the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the program to which you're applying. These will tell you what is eligible and what's not, and what an application should contain.
- The web page for each program includes sample applications. Don't take those as models, but as examples of how someone else made the case for her/his project.
- Contact NEH staff with questions. They can help you figure out what program is right for your project. Contact information is on each program web page. For some programs staff will read and comment on draft applications.
- Register with grants.gov

Make your case

- The Notice of Funding Opportunity will tell you the criteria by which your application will be evaluated. Your application should make a case for how your application meets those criteria.
- For most NEH programs, the most important criterion is the project's significance. Tell your readers why this project is important. Who should read your work? How will it change the field?
- Locate your project in a larger context. Know the literature, issues, questions, and controversies on your topic.
- Intrigue your readers. Make them want to know the answers to the questions you're asking.
- Provide a realistic timeline and work plan.

Think about your audience

- Your application will be read by both specialists and generalists. You will need to persuade them that your project is important and that you know what you're doing.
- Make it easy for your readers. Write clearly and concisely. Avoid language that is too abstract, unclear, or jargon laden. Define concepts and terminology.
- If possible, explicitly address the evaluation criteria.
- Balance the abstract and the particular. Tell readers why your project is important, but also provide examples.
- Show them you know what you're doing. Describe your planned methods and sources.
- Anticipate your readers' concerns and address them.

Attend to details

- Ask colleagues, preferably those who are not in your field, to read a draft application.
- Make sure your bibliography and supporting materials are up to date.
- Proofread your work: make sure you include all required components and stay within prescribed guidelines (e.g., page limits and spacing requirements)
- If you don't succeed, ask for feedback and try again.

Information on NEH grant opportunities is at neh.gov