Workshop: “Writing a Successful Grant Proposal.”

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February 2 (Tuesday), 3:00-5:00. Stibbs, LBC (Room 203).

Contents:

- Funding Opportunities at the NSF, ACLS, and NEH
  - Program Areas of the Behavior and Cognitive Sciences (BCS) Division of the NSF
  - Program Areas of the Social and Economic Sciences (SES) Division of the NSF
  - NSF-Wide Active Funding Opportunities
  - Specialized Information for Graduate Students
  - Excerpts from Chapter III of the Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG) (NSF 08-1 January 2008): The NSF’s Merit Review Criteria
  - Transformative Research at the NSF
  - History of the ACLS
  - 2009-2010 ACLS Fellowships and Grant Competitions
  - NEH Overview
  - NEH Fellowships
  - NEH Grant Programs and Deadlines
- General response to a General Query about the NSF.
- NSF Merit Review Facts
- NSF Merit Review Broader Impacts Criterion: Representative Activities
- ACLS. "Writing Proposals for ACLS Competition."
- SSRC. "Art of Writing Proposals."
Program Areas of the Behavior and Cognitive Sciences (BCS) Division of the NSF

Anthropological Sciences
  * Archaeology and Archaeometry
  * Cultural Anthropology
  * Cultural Anthropology Scholars Awards
  * High-Risk Research in Anthropology (HRRA)
  * Human Origins (HOMINID)
  * Physical Anthropology

Geography and Environmental Sciences
  * Dynamics of Coupled Natural and Human Systems (CNH)
  * Geography and Regional Science

Psychological and Language Sciences
  * Cognitive Neuroscience
  * Developmental and Learning Sciences (DLS)
  * Documenting Endangered Languages (DEL)
  * Linguistics
  * Perception, Action & Cognition
  * Social Psychology

Additional Opportunities
  * Cross-Directorate Activities (CDA)
  * SBE Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants
Program Areas of the Social and Economic Sciences (SES) Division of the NSF

Decision, Risk and Management Sciences (DRMS)

Economics

Ethics Education in Science and Engineering (EESE)

General Social Survey (GSS) Competition

Innovation and Organizational Sciences (IOS)

Law and Social Sciences

Methodology, Measurement, and Statistics (MMS)

Nanotechnology Undergraduate Education (NUE) in Engineering

Political Science

SBE Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants

Science of Science and Innovation Policy (SciSIP)

Science, Technology, and Society (STS)

Social and Behavioral Dimensions of National Security, Conflict, and Cooperation (NSCC)

Sociology
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<td>ACCELERATING DISCOVERY IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING THROUGH PETASCALE SIMULATIONS AND ANALYSIS (PetaApps)</td>
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Full Proposal:
- September 25, 2010
- Accepted
- February 4, 2010
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<td>Cyberinfrastructure Training, Education, Advancement, and Mentoring for Our 21st Century Workforce</td>
<td>10-532</td>
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<td>Developing Global Scientists and Engineers (International Research Experiences for Students (IRES) and Doctoral Dissertation Enhancement Projects (DDEP))</td>
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<td>Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program</td>
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<td>High Performance Computing System Acquisition: Towards a PetaScale Computing Environment for Science and Engineering</td>
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Human and Social Dynamics: Competition for FY 2008 (HSD) 08-508

Industry/University Cooperative Research Centers Program (I/UCRC) 09-565

Full Proposal: March 6, 2010
Letter of Intent: June 26, 2010

Full Proposal: September 25, 2010
Letter of Intent: January 1, 2011

Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship Program (IGERT) 10-523

Preliminary Proposal: March 29, 2010

Full Proposal: September 30, 2010

Interdisciplinary Training for Undergraduates in Biological and Mathematical Sciences (UBM) 08-510

Full Proposal: February 11, 2010

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<td>Joint DMS/NIGMS Initiative to Support Research in the Area of Mathematical Biology (DMS/NIGMS)</td>
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<td>Mathematical Sciences: Innovations at the Interface with Computer Sciences (MSPA-MCS)</td>
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<td><strong>NSF GRADUATE STEM FELLOWS IN K-12 EDUCATION (GK-12)</strong></td>
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Partnerships for International Research and Education

Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring

Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU)

Research in Undergraduate Institutions (RUI)

Science and Technology Centers: Integrative Partnerships

Science of Learning Centers (SLC)
Letter of Intent: March 15, 2010

Full Proposal: April 15, 2010
Specialized Information for Graduate Students

The following programs provide either direct (i.e., from NSF) or indirect (i.e., from an awardee institution) funding for students at this level or identify programs that focus on educational developments for this group such as curricula development, training or retention.

Arctic Research Opportunities
Centers of Research Excellence in Science and Technology (CREST) and HBCU Research Infrastructure for Science and Engineering (RISE)
Collaboration in Mathematical Geosciences
Developing Global Scientists and Engineers (International Research Experiences for Students (IRES) and Doctoral Dissertation Enhancement Projects (DDEP))
Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grants in the Directorate for Biological Sciences
Dynamics of Coupled Natural and Human Systems
East Asia and Pacific Summer Institutes for U.S. Graduate Students
Ethics Education in Science and Engineering
Federal Cyber Service: Scholarship for Service
Graduate Research Fellowship Program
Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship Program
International Research and Education: Planning Visits and Workshops
National Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Education Digital Library
NSF Astronomy and Astrophysics Postdoctoral Fellowships
NSF GRADUATE TEACHING FELLOWS IN K-12 EDUCATION
Pan-American Advanced Studies Institutes Program
Partnerships for International Research and Education
Postdoctoral Fellowships in Polar Regions Research
Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring
Undergraduate Research Collaboratives
Proposals received by the NSF Proposal Processing Unit are assigned to the appropriate NSF program for acknowledgement and, if they meet NSF requirements, for review. All proposals are carefully reviewed by a scientist, engineer, or educator serving as an NSF Program Officer, and usually by three to ten other persons outside NSF who are experts in the particular fields represented by the proposal. Proposers are invited to suggest names of persons they believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal and/or persons they would prefer not review the proposal. These suggestions may serve as one source in the reviewer selection process at the Program Officer’s discretion. Program Officers may obtain comments from assembled review panels or from site visits before recommending final action on proposals. Senior NSF staff further review recommendations for awards. A flowchart that depicts the entire NSF proposal and award process (and associated timeline) is included as GPG Exhibit III-1.

A. Review Criteria

The National Science Foundation strives to conduct a fair, competitive, transparent merit-review process for the selection of projects. All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of two National Science Board approved merit review criteria. In some instances, however, NSF will employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities. For example, proposals for large facility projects also might be subject to special review criteria outlined in the program solicitation.

The two merit review criteria are listed below. The criteria include considerations that help define them. These considerations are suggestions, and not all will apply to any given proposal. While proposers must address both merit review criteria, reviewers will be asked to address only those considerations that are relevant to the proposal being considered and for which the reviewer is qualified to make judgments.

What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?

How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields? How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project? (If appropriate, the reviewer will comment on the quality of prior work.) To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts? How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity? Is there sufficient access to resources?
What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity? 

How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning? How well does the proposed activity broaden the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.)? To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks, and partnerships? Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding? What may be the benefits of the proposed activity to society?

NSF staff will give careful consideration to the following in making funding decisions:

*Integration of Research and Education*

One of the principal strategies in support of NSF’s goals is to foster integration of research and education through the programs, projects and activities it supports at academic and research institutions. These institutions provide abundant opportunities where individuals may concurrently assume responsibilities as researchers, educators, and students, and where all can engage in joint efforts that infuse education with the excitement of discovery and enrich research through the diversity of learning perspectives.

*Integrating Diversity into NSF Programs, Projects, and Activities*

Broadening opportunities and enabling the participation of all citizens, women and men, underrepresented minorities, and persons with disabilities, are essential to the health and vitality of science and engineering. NSF is committed to this principle of diversity and deems it central to the programs, projects, and activities it considers and supports.
Important Notice No. 130: Transformative Research

National Science Foundation
Office of the Director
Arlington, Virginia 22230

September 24, 2007

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO PRESIDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES AND HEADS OF OTHER NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION AWARDEE ORGANIZATIONS

Subject: Transformative Research

At the 399th meeting of the National Science Board (Board), the Board unanimously approved a motion to enhance support of transformative research at the NSF. Additionally, the Board approved a change to the Intellectual Merit Review Criterion specified in Part I of the NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide: the Grant Proposal Guide to specifically include review of the extent to which a proposal also suggests and explores potentially transformative concepts. The full text of the newly revised criterion is as follows:

What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?

How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields? How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project? (If appropriate, the reviewer will comment on the quality of prior work.) To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts? How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity? Is there sufficient access to resources?

Effective October 1, 2007, the Grant Proposal Guide, as well as new funding opportunities issued after that date, will incorporate the revised new Intellectual Merit criterion. Necessary changes also will be made to NSF reviewer systems to incorporate the revised language. All proposals received after January 5, 2008, will be reviewed against the newly revised criterion.

The term "transformative research" is being used to describe a range of endeavors which promise extraordinary outcomes, such as: revolutionizing entire disciplines; creating entirely new fields; or disrupting accepted theories and perspectives — in other words, those endeavors which have the potential to change the way we address challenges in science, engineering, and innovation. Supporting more transformative research is of critical importance in the fast-paced, science and technology-intensive world of the 21st Century.

The concept of transformative research is not new to NSF. For example, the results of a recent survey revealed that the majority of respondents (proposers) perceive that NSF already welcomes transformative research, and that NSF was strongly preferred over other funding sources as the place to submit a transformative idea. However, there is always room for improvement.
To make progress in enhancing support for transformative research, NSF will need a positive, open attitude toward experimentation with our processes and programs that allows us the necessary space to discover what will ultimately work best. To implement the emphasis on transformative research, NSF will:

1. Infuse support of potentially transformative research throughout NSF and all of its programs;
2. Learn how to facilitate potentially transformative research; and
3. Lead the way for the community through creating opportunities for investigators to submit proposals for potentially transformative research.

While much can be accomplished with implementation of a revised criterion, improved communication and existing award mechanisms, these activities alone are insufficient to fully accomplish the above approach. We are creating an NSF working group to develop the framework and recommend implementation details for a new funding mechanism for "early-concept" research projects, including a mechanism to monitor and track the impact. Learning from small scale pilots and community feedback will be vital in this process NSF will broadly advertise the new funding mechanism to the community once it has been finalized.

We challenge you to encourage, support and foster transformative research by exercising leadership in your own institutions. The nation needs bold efforts, at the most demanding levels of creative enterprise, to sustain a leadership role in the global economy. We have always been remarkably adept at this in America. Working together, I am confident we can do an even better job in the future.

Arden L. Bement, Jr.
Director

1 The 399th meeting of the National Science Board was held August 6-8, 2007.

2 For the full text of NSF merit review criteria, see Chapter III of the GPG, available electronically at: http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpg
On Our History

The American Council of Learned Societies was created in 1919 to represent the United States in the Union Académique Internationale. The founders of ACLS—representatives of 13 learned societies—were convinced that a federation of scholarly organizations, most with open membership but all dedicated to excellence in research, was the best possible combination of America’s democratic ethos and intellectual aspirations. The constitution of the new Council stated its mission as “the advancement of humanistic studies in all fields of the humanities and social sciences and the maintenance and strengthening of national societies dedicated to those studies.”

Advancing Scholarship in the Humanities

Since its founding, ACLS has provided the humanities and related social sciences with leadership, opportunities for innovation, and national and international representation. The Council’s many activities have at their core the practice of scholarly self-governance. Central to ACLS throughout its history have been its programs of fellowships and grants aiding research. ACLS made its first grants, totaling $4,500, in 1926; in 2008, the Council will give more than $9 million in fellowship stipends and other awards. All ACLS awards are made through rigorous peer review by specially appointed committees of scholars from throughout the United States and, in some programs, abroad.

Maintaining and Strengthening Relationships among Learned Societies

The executive directors of the member societies of ACLS meet together as the Conference of Administrative Officers (CAO), which before 1988 was known as the Conference of Secretaries. At its first meeting in 1925, the Conference had eleven members, including Frederic Ogg of the American Political Science Association and Ernest W. Burgess of the American Sociological Society (now the American Sociological Association). The goal of the first meeting—as of every meeting for the past 83 years—was “the promotion of closer relations between the associations of humanists [through] a conference in which the secretaries, or principal executive officers, of its constituent societies could make each other’s acquaintance, explain to each other the character, aims and activities of their respective organizations, and discuss, in the light of their various experiences, the many common problems of their societies” (1).

Exploring New Methods and Subjects of Humanities Research

In addition to convening scholars for the purpose of peer review, ACLS has often organized committees of researchers to identify promising fields of study. The development of area studies in this country owes much to the impetus provided by ACLS. The original concept of organizing scholarly expertise around an area or culture region grew out of the Council’s early work in Far Eastern and Slavic studies and language training, and the Council's ability to bring a wide variety of humanists and social scientists together in interdisciplinary work made it possible to launch area studies and sustain them over an extended period. After World War II, when the practical need for such competence was evident, ACLS and the Social Science Research Council joined to organize and develop African, Asian, Latin American, Near and Middle Eastern, Slavic, and East and West European studies.

Council committees helped pioneer other areas of research. The Committee on Research in Native American Languages under the leadership of Franz Boas and Edward Sapir began in 1927 to “secure an adequate record of Indian languages and dialects” (2). The Committee on a Journal of Medieval Studies, begun in 1924, founded the Journal Speculum. The Committee on the History of Ideas, which included Richard McKeon and Arthur O. Lovejoy, created the Journal of the History of Ideas. As Lovejoy wrote in the journal’s first issue, “The processes of
the human mind, in the individual or group, which manifest themselves in history, do not run in the enclosed channels corresponding to the officially established divisions of university faculties." At the founding conference of the Committee on Negro Studies in 1940, Ralph Bunche observed, "We cannot ignore the importance of making clear to ourselves the scope of our interest in terms of the very broad social implications of our deliberations and resources" (3). Many of the fields of study encouraged by ACLS have reshaped our understanding of the eras, peoples, and subjects they explore.

Since the introduction of computers and other new forms of technology to research in the humanities and social sciences, ACLS has played a major role in helping scholars explore the impact of new technologies on their fields. As early as 1964, ACLS developed a program of grants and fellowships designed to encourage new and significant use of computers in humanistic research, an effort that continues today with our Digital Innovation Fellowships. Our Cultural Commonwealth, the report of the ACLS Commission on Cyberinfrastructure for the Humanities and Social Sciences, issued in 2006, recommended steps toward a more digital humanities that would make use of new forms of research, reading, and writing.

ACLS has a continuing interest in the problems of scholarly publication. In the past, it conducted a survey of publication needs, established a publication service to advise scholars on effective means to communicate research, and aided scholars through subventions and, to the extent it had the funds, by direct publication. The National Enquiry into the Production and Dissemination of Scholarly Knowledge, sponsored by ACLS from 1974 to 1979, conducted an investigation of all aspects of the publication and dissemination of humanistic scholarship. In 1979 it presented a report of its findings and recommendations, Scholarly Communication: The Report of the National Enquiry, published by the Johns Hopkins University Press. As a result of this work, ACLS operated an Office of Scholarly Communication and Technology in Washington, DC, until 1984. Today, the ACLS Humanities E-Book Collection focuses on how digital innovations can enhance scholarly communication with new capacities for representing knowledge.

Representing Humanities Scholarship at Home and Abroad

By bringing scholars together as scholars rather than as specialists in particular fields, ACLS is well positioned to serve as advocate on behalf of the scholarly humanities in public fora and policy arenas. The Council's critical role in helping establish (in 1964) and reauthorize (in 1985) the National Endowment for the Humanities is perhaps the most notable example of its exercise of this function.

While continuing to represent the United States in the Union Académique Internationale, ACLS has been active in international scholarly exchange. From 1961 to 1992, the ACLS American Studies Program aided overseas communities of scholars specializing in the study of the United States. The Council, along with other members of the Associated Board of Research Councils, founded the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, the agency that administers the Senior Fulbright Program. In 1992, the United States Information Agency asked ACLS to reestablish the Fulbright Program in Vietnam, which is now operated through the United States Embassy in Hanoi. The ACLS Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam today offers fellowship and study opportunities to Vietnamese scholars. In 1966, ACLS, the Social Science Research Council, and the National Academy of Sciences founded the Committee on Scholarly Communication with China, which maintains an office in Beijing to assist American academic institutions with programming in that country. Since 1998, the ACLS Humanities Program in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine has made more than 570 awards to scholars working in often difficult conditions.

Structure and Governance

The organizational structure of ACLS has seen few major changes in the Council's nearly 50-year existence. The most notable change is the growth in the number of member societies, from 13 founding societies to 70 constituent members today. As the number of societies increased, it became impossible for a council with two representatives from each member to govern effectively. In 1947, therefore, a Board of
Directors, elected by the Council, was created to direct ACLS affairs, and the number of delegates representing each society was reduced to one. A second major organizational change occurred in 1957, when the Council moved its headquarters from Washington to New York and appointed Frederick Burkhardt as its first president, signaling a new determination to place scholarship at the center of public culture.

ACLS was incorporated in the District of Columbia in 1924 and received a charter from the United States Congress in 1982.

**Archives**
The ACLS archives are held in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress and are open to qualified researchers.

**Sources**


# 2009-10 ACLS Fellowship and Grant Competitions

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<th>Fellowship Type</th>
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<td>including but not limited to:</td>
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<td>ACLS/New York Public Library Fellowships</td>
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<td>Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowships</td>
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2009-10 application information will be available in July 2009 at [http://www.acls.org/programs/comps](http://www.acls.org/programs/comps).
NEH Overview

What is NEH?

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. To visit NEH's Web site, click here.

What does NEH do?

Because democracy demands wisdom, the National Endowment for the Humanities 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 providing grants for high-quality humanities projects in four funding areas: preserving and providing access to cultural resources, education, research, and public programs.

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 the humanities in schools and colleges across the nation
- 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

What projects has NEH supported?

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

- "Treasures of Tutankhamen," the blockbuster exhibition seen by more than 1.5 million people
- The Civil War, the landmark documentary by Ken Burns viewed by 38 million Americans
- Library of America, editions of novels, essays, and poems
celebrating America's literary heritage

- United States Newspaper Project, an effort to catalog and microfilm 63.3 million pages of newspapers dating from the early Republic
- Fifteen Pulitzer prize-winning books, including those by James M. McPherson, Louis Menand, Joan D. Hedrick, and Bernard Bailyn

What are the humanities?

According to the 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, "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."

How is NEH structured?

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 Chairman Jim Leach was nominated by President Barack Obama in July 2009 and confirmed by the Senate in early August. He began his term as the ninth NEH Chairman on August 12, 2009. Leach previously served 30 years representing southeastern Iowa in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he chaired the Banking and Financial Services Committee, the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, and founded and co-chaired the Congressional Humanities Caucus. A brief biography of the NEH Chairman is available by clicking here.
Fellowships

Online applications accepted through May 4, 2010

Date posted: January 19, 2010

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 45.160

Questions?

Contact NEH’s Division of Research Programs at 202-606-8200 or fellowships@neh.gov. Hearing-impaired applicants can contact NEH via TDD at 1-866-372-2930.

I. Program Description

Fellowships support individuals pursuing advanced research that is of value to humanities scholars, general audiences, or both.

Recipients usually produce articles, monographs, books, digital materials, archaeological site reports, translations, editions, or other scholarly resources.

Fellowships support continuous full-time work for a period of six to twelve months.

Fellowships may not be used for

- curricular or pedagogical tools, methods, theories, or surveys;
- preparation or revision of textbooks;
- projects that seek to promote a particular political, philosophical, religious, or ideological point of view;
- projects that advocate a particular program of social action;
- works in the creative and performing arts, i.e., painting, writing fiction or poetry, dance performance, etc.; or
- doctoral dissertations or theses.

NEH Information

- Endowment-Wide Programs and Initiatives
- Division of Research Programs

Guideline Overview

I. Program Description
II. Award Information
III. Eligibility
IV. Application and Submission
V. Application Review
VI. Award Administration
VII. Points of Contact
VIII. Other Information

Program Resources

- Frequently asked questions
- DUNS number requirement
- NEH Supplemental Information for Individuals form (2-page PDF)
- Previously-funded Fellowships

Sample applications

1) History and biography (6-page PDF)
2) Literature and Media Studies (6-page PDF)
3) Ancient Near Eastern Studies (6-page PDF)
4) Philosophy (6-page PDF)

Grants.gov Help

- Download the current version of Adobe Reader
NEH encourages submission of Fellowships applications from faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Institutions with High Hispanic Enrollment, and Tribal Colleges and Universities.

The Fellowships program welcomes projects that respond to NEH’s new Bridging Cultures initiative. Such projects could focus on cultures internationally or within the United States. International projects might seek to enlarge Americans’ understanding of other places and times, as well as other perspectives and intellectual traditions. American projects might explore the great variety of cultural influences on, and myriad subcultures within, American society. These projects might also investigate how Americans have approached and attempted to surmount seemingly unbridgeable cultural divides, or examine the ideals of civility and civic discourse that have informed this quest.

Providing access to grant products

As a taxpayer-supported federal agency, NEH endeavors to make the products of its awards available to the broadest possible audience. Our goal is for scholars, educators, students, and the American public to have ready and easy access to the wide range of NEH grant products. For the Fellowships program, such products may include digital resources, Web sites, and the like. For projects that lead to the development of Web sites, all other considerations being equal, NEH gives preference to those that provide free access to the public. Detailed guidance on access and dissemination matters can be found in Section IV, Final product and dissemination, below.

II. Award Information

Fellowships cover periods lasting from six to twelve months at a stipend of $4,200 per month in outright funds. The maximum stipend is $50,400 in outright funds for a twelve-month period. Applicants should request award periods that suit their schedules and the needs of their projects. Requesting an award period shorter than twelve months will not improve an applicant’s chances of receiving a fellowship.

(Learn more about different types of grant funding.)

Recipients may begin their awards as early as January 1, 2011, and as late as July 1, 2012.

The award period must be continuous, and award recipients must work full time on their projects. Teaching assignments or other major activities may not be undertaken during the fellowship period. NEH permits part-time awards only in exceptional circumstances, which might include unusual institutional administrative duties that cannot be relinquished or hardships unforeseen at the application deadline.

Prospective applicants who have questions are encouraged to contact the Fellowships staff at
fellowships@neh.gov.

Cost sharing

Cost sharing includes cash contributions to a project by the applicant and third parties, as well as in-kind contributions, such as donated goods and services. Cost sharing also includes gift money raised to release federal matching funds. NEH Fellowships do not require cost sharing.

III. Eligibility

The Fellowships program accepts applications from researchers, teachers, and writers, whether they have an institutional affiliation or not.

While applicants need not have advanced degrees, individuals currently enrolled in a degree-granting program are ineligible to apply. Graduate students seeking support for a degree in the humanities should consider the Department of Education’s Jacob K. Javits Fellowship Program. Applicants for NEH Fellowships who have satisfied all the requirements for a degree and are awaiting its conferral are eligible, but such applicants need a letter from the dean of the conferring school or their department chair attesting to the applicant’s status as of May 4, 2010. This signed letter may be faxed to the Fellowships program at 202-606-8204; alternatively, a PDF version of the signed letter may be included as an attachment to an e-mail message sent to fellowships@neh.gov.

Citizenship

All U.S. citizens, whether they reside inside or outside the United States, are eligible to apply. Foreign nationals who have been living in the United States or its jurisdictions for at least the three years prior to the application deadline are also eligible.

Projects previously supported by NEH Fellowships

An applicant may apply for funding for a project that has previously received an NEH Fellowship. NEH will ask evaluators to review the accomplishments from the prior fellowship and determine if the project warrants additional support.

Concurrent grants from other organizations

Recipients of NEH Fellowships may simultaneously hold fellowships or grants from institutions other than NEH—including sabbaticals and grants from their own institutions—in support of the same project during their award period.

Multiple applications

Applicants may compete concurrently in the following programs for individuals in a given year:

- Library of Congress (LOC) - [John W. Kluge Center Fellowships](http://www.loc.gov);
- Japan-United States Friendship Commission (JUSFC) - [Fellowship Program for Advanced Social Sciences Research on Japan](http://www.jusfc.us);
- NEH and National Science Foundation - [Fellowship Program for Documenting Endangered Languages (DEL)](http://www.nsf.gov);
- Summer Stipends;
• Teaching Development Fellowships; and

• Awards for Faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Institutions with High Hispanic Enrollment, and Tribal Colleges and Universities.

Successful Fellowships applicants who plan research at the LOC may be offered a jointly funded NEH-LOC Kluge Center Fellowship.

Applicants may receive only one NEH individual award in a federal fiscal year (October 1, 2010-September 30, 2011).

Late, incomplete, and ineligible applications will not be reviewed.

IV. Application and Submission Information

Applications must be submitted on or before the May 4, 2010, deadline.

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION

Application advice

Prior to beginning, applicants should review the evaluation criteria listed below in Section V and consult the Frequently Asked Questions.

Because of the large number of applications, the Fellowships staff is not able to read and comment on draft proposals. However, potential applicants may discuss with staff specific concerns or questions that arise during the preparation of their proposals. Contact NEH’s Division of Research Programs at 202-606-8200 or fellowships@neh.gov. Hearing-impaired applicants can contact NEH via TDD at 1-866-372-2930.

Once an application has been submitted, staff will not comment on it except with respect to issues of completeness and eligibility.

NEH does not accept applications by e-mail or fax.

All applications must be downloaded, completed, and submitted via Grants.gov. Your application should consist of the following five parts:

1. NEH Supplemental Information for Individuals Form

The NEH Supplemental Information for Individuals form—in Portable Document Format (PDF)—can be found here. It can be downloaded and saved to your computer. Open the form and provide the following information:

Field of Project: From the drop-down menu, choose the field of study that best describes the field of your project.

Project Director Field of Study: From the drop-down menu, choose the field of study that best describes your area of expertise.

Address Information: Please indicate if the mailing address given on the SF-424-Individual form (discussed in Step 4 below) is your home or work address.

Institutional Affiliation: If you are not affiliated with an institution of higher education,
please click "No" and continue to the Status section. If you are affiliated with an institution of higher education, please complete the information for that institution. Applicants are strongly encouraged to include their institution's DUNS number and TIN/EIN number. These numbers are generally provided by an institution's sponsored research office and greatly improve efficiency when your application is being processed.

**Status:** Indicate if you are a junior scholar or a senior scholar. Junior scholars are defined as those who are seven years or fewer beyond their final degree; senior scholars are defined as those who are eight years or more beyond their final degree.

**Reference Letters:** Provide the names, e-mail addresses, and affiliations for your two recommenders.

Applicants are responsible for providing referees with relevant materials (such as a draft of the application). Letters of reference are more highly regarded if they address the specific proposed activity and the candidate's ability to undertake it. Ideally, referees should come from different institutions.

After the deadline, NEH will contact the two recommenders, requesting that they submit their letters online. Letters must be submitted online **not later than June 6, 2010**.

Missing reference letters will not disqualify an application from review.

**Nominating Official:** Please leave this section blank.

2. **Narrative—Not to Exceed Three Single-Spaced Pages**

Applicants should provide an intellectual justification for their projects, conveying the ideas, objectives, methods, and work plan. A simple statement of need or intent is insufficient. Applicants should format pages with one-inch margins and with a font size no smaller than eleven point.

Applications exceeding this page limit or violating the format guidelines will not be reviewed.

The narrative should not assume specialized knowledge and should be free of technical terms and jargon.

In the course of writing a narrative, applicants should address the following areas:

- **Research and contribution**
  
  Describe the intellectual significance of the proposed project, including its value to humanities scholars, general audiences, or both. Provide an overview of the project, explaining the basic ideas, problems, or questions examined by the study. Explain how the project will complement, challenge, or expand relevant studies in the field.

- **Methods and work plan**
  
  Clarify the part or stage of the project that will be supported by the fellowship. Provide a work plan describing what will be accomplished during the award period. For book projects, explain how the final project will be organized. If possible, provide a brief chapter outline. For digital projects, describe the technologies that will be used and developed, and how the scholarship will be presented to benefit audiences in the humanities.

- **Competencies, skills, and access**
If the area of inquiry is new to the applicant, provide reasons for working in it, and explain the ability to work in it. Specify the level of competence in the languages or digital technologies needed for the study. Describe where the study will be conducted and what research materials will be used. If relevant, specify the arrangements for access to archives, collections, or institutions that contain the necessary resources.

○ **Final product and dissemination**

Describe the intended audience and the intended results of the project. If relevant, explain how the results will be disseminated and why these means are appropriate to the subject matter and audience. If the project has a Web site, provide the URL.

If the final product will appear in a language other than English, explain how access and dissemination will be affected.

NEH expects grantees to provide broad access to all grant products, insofar as the conditions of the materials and intellectual property rights allow. In the case of digital products NEH strongly encourages projects that will offer free public access to online resources. For projects that lead to the development of Web sites, all other considerations being equal, NEH gives preference to those that provide free access to the public.

3. **Bibliography—Not to Exceed One Single-Spaced Page**

The bibliography should consist of primary and secondary sources that relate directly to the project. Include works that pertain to both the project’s substance and its theoretical or methodological approaches. Evaluators will use the bibliography to assess your knowledge of the subject area.

4. **Résumé—Not to Exceed Two Single-Spaced Pages**

Your résumé should provide the following:

○ **Current and Past Positions.**

○ **Education:** List degrees, dates awarded, and titles of theses or dissertations.

○ **Awards and Honors:** Include dates. If you have received prior support from NEH, indicate the dates of these grants and the publications that resulted from them.

○ **Publications:** Include full citations for publications and presentations.

○ **Other Relevant Professional Activities and Accomplishments.**

5. **Appendix—Only for Editions, Translations, or Database Projects, or for Proposals that Include Visual Materials**

○ **Editions or Translations:** Provide a sample of the original text (one page) and the edited or translated version (one page).

○ **Database Projects:** Provide a sample entry (one page).

○ **Visual Materials:** Provide a sample (one page) in PDF format, not .jpg or other common graphic format.
HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION VIA GRANTS.GOV

All applicants for Fellowships must submit their proposals through Grants.gov, the central federal government portal for all grant applications. To do so, applicants must have a computer with Internet access and the current version of the free Adobe Reader. The latest version of Adobe Reader, which is designed to function with PCs and Macintosh computers using a variety of popular operating systems, is available at no charge from the Adobe Web site (www.adobe.com). What follows is a step-by-step guide for submitting your Fellowships application through Grants.gov.

STEP 1: Register with Grants.gov

For new applicants only: Applicants who have never registered as individual applicants at Grants.gov must go to https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/IndCPRegister and enter this Funding Opportunity Number:

20100504-FA

Tip: NEH strongly recommends that you complete your registration at least one week before the application deadline. Grants.gov has provided easy step-by-step instructions (in PDF format) here: www.grants.gov/assets/IndvUserGuide.pdf.

Applicants who have already registered at Grants.gov as individuals need not re-register to submit their fellowships proposals.

Applicants who lose their username and password can request a reminder at https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/secured/ApplicantLogin.jsp.

If you have problems registering with Grants.gov, contact the Grants.gov help desk at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

STEP 2: Download the current version of the free Adobe Reader

To fill out your application, you will need to download and install the current version of the free Adobe Reader. To download the Reader or update the Reader already installed on your computer, go to www.adobe.com. Click on “Get Adobe Reader” and then “Download Now.” Once installed, this software will allow you to view and fill out Grants.Gov application packages for any federal agency.

STEP 3: Download the Application Package

To submit your application, you will need to download the application package from the Grants.gov Web site. You can download the application package at any time. (You do not have to wait for your Grants.gov registration to be complete.) Click the button to the right to download the package.

Save the application package to your computer’s hard drive.
Like any other file on your computer, the NEH Fellowships application can be selected, opened, and saved; you do not have to be online to work on it.

You can save your work by clicking the “Save” button at the top of your screen. *Tip:* If you choose to save your application package before you have completed it, you will receive a message indicating that your application is not valid. Click “OK” to save your work and complete the package another time.

The application package contains two forms that you must complete in order to submit your application:

1. **Application for Federal Assistance SF-424-Individual**—this form asks for basic information about the project and the applicant.

2. **NEH Attachment Form**—this form allows you to attach the five components of your application: the NEH Supplemental Information for Individuals form, the narrative, the bibliography, the résumé, and (if necessary) the appendix.

To assist applicants, Grants.gov provides a helpful [troubleshooting page](http://www.grants.gov).

### STEP 4: Prepare the Application Forms

A complete application includes the following items:

- A completed SF-424-Individual form; and

- An Attachment Form to which you must attach a completed NEH Supplemental Information for Individuals form, project narrative, bibliography, résumé, and appendix (if necessary). These attachments are described at length at the beginning of this section.

**How to Fill Out the SF-424 Short Form**

Select the SF-424 Individual form in the Mandatory Documents field of the application package. Move it to the Mandatory Documents for Submission field using the right-facing arrow button. Click the “Open Forms” button to begin using the form. Provide the following information:

**Name of Federal Agency:** This will be filled in automatically.

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** This will be filled in automatically.

**Date Received:** Please leave blank.

**Funding Opportunity Number:** This will be filled in automatically.

**Applicant Information:** Provide your name, title, mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone and fax numbers.

For question “e,” please enter the number of your Congressional district. For example, if you live in the 5th Congressional District of your state, enter “5.” If you don’t have a Congressional district (i.e., you are in a state or U.S. territory that doesn’t have districts or you are in a foreign country), enter a “0” (zero). To determine your Congressional district, visit the House of Representatives Web site at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and use the “Find Your Representative” tool.
Funded applicants will be required to supply their full Social Security Numbers after the competition is completed.

**Project Information**: Enter the title of your project. Your title should be brief (not more than 125 plain-text characters), descriptive, and informative to a nonspecialist audience. Provide a description of your project that does not exceed a thousand plain-text characters, written for a nonspecialist audience, that states the importance of the proposed work to larger issues in the humanities. Enter the starting and ending dates for your project.

**Check the box “By signing this Application…”**

Use the “Close Form” button at the upper left of the form to save your work and return to the main menu.

**How to Use the NEH Attachment Form**

The component parts of your application must be attached to the Attachment Form in Portable Document Format (PDF). NEH cannot accept attachments in their original word processing, graphic, or spreadsheet formats. If you do not have access to software to convert your files into PDFs, many available low-cost and free software packages will do so. To learn more, go to www.neh.gov/grants/grantsgov/pdf.html.

When you open the NEH Attachment Form, you will find fifteen attachment buttons, labeled “Attachment 1” through “Attachment 15.” By clicking on a button, you will be able to choose the file from your computer that you wish to attach. You must name and attach your files in the proper order, as listed below:

**ATTACHMENT 1**: To this button, please attach the completed **NEH Supplemental Information for Individuals** form. Name the file “NEHinfo.pdf”.

**ATTACHMENT 2**: To this button, please attach your project **narrative**. Name the file “narrative.pdf”.

**ATTACHMENT 3**: To this button, please attach your **bibliography**. Name the file “bibliography.pdf”.

**ATTACHMENT 4**: To this button, please attach your **résumé**. Name the file “resume.pdf”.

**ATTACHMENT 5**: To this button, please attach your **appendix** (if necessary). Necessary appendices include translation samples, database samples, and visual materials. Name the file “appendix.pdf”.

No other attachments should be included. Applications submitted with additional attachments or with attachments that exceed the length limitations will be disqualified.

**STEP 5: Upload Your Application to Grants.gov**

When you have completed the SF-424-Individual form and attached the component parts of your application to the Attachment form, save your work to activate the “Submit” button. You are now ready to upload your application package to NEH via Grants.gov.

To submit your application, click the “Submit” button. Your computer will automatically connect to the Internet, and you will be asked to supply your username and password (see Step 1 above). Once
you have successfully entered your username and password, electronically sign and submit your application. When you click the “Sign and Submit Application” button, your application package will be uploaded to Grants.gov.

After the upload is complete, a confirmation page, which includes a Grants.gov tracking number, will appear. This message indicates that you have submitted your application to Grants.gov. Please print this page for your records. You should also receive three confirmation e-mail messages.

NEH suggests that you submit your application as early as possible, but not later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the day of the deadline. Doing so will leave you time to contact the Grants.gov help desk for support, should you encounter a technical problem of some sort. The Grants.gov help desk is now available seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day (except for federal holidays), at 1-800-518-4726. You can also send an e-mail message to support@grants.gov.

DEADLINES

Applications for NEH Fellowships must be received by Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 4, 2010. Grants.gov will date- and time-stamp your application after it is fully uploaded. Applications submitted after that date will not be accepted.

V. Application Review

Evaluators are asked to apply the following five criteria when judging the quality of applications.

1. The intellectual significance of the proposed project, including its value to humanities scholars, general audiences, or both.

2. The quality or promise of quality of the applicant’s work as an interpreter of the humanities.

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

4. The feasibility of the proposed plan of work, including, when appropriate, the soundness of the dissemination and access plans.

5. The likelihood that the applicant will complete the project.

Fellowships support projects at any stage of development.

Review and selection process

Knowledgeable persons outside NEH will read each application and advise the agency about its merits. NEH staff comments on matters of fact or on significant issues that otherwise would be missing from these reviews, then makes recommendations to the National Council on the Humanities. The National Council meets at various times during the year to advise the NEH chairman on grants. The chairman takes into account the advice provided by the review process and, by law, makes all funding decisions.

VI. Award Administration Information

Award notices
Applicants will be notified of the results of their applications by e-mail in early December 2010. All applicants may obtain the evaluations of their applications by sending a letter or e-mail message to NEH, Division of Research Programs, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Room 318, Washington, D.C. 20506 or fellowships@neh.gov.

Award conditions

Before submitting an application, applicants should review NEH’s Research Misconduct Policy.

The requirements for awards are contained in the General Information on NEH Fellowships and any specific terms and conditions contained in the award document.

Reporting requirements

A final performance report will be due within ninety days after the award ending date. This report must be submitted electronically via “eGMS,” NEH’s online grant management system.

VII. Points of Contact

If you have questions about the program, contact:

Division of Research Programs
Room 318
National Endowment for the Humanities
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20506
202-606-8200
fellowships@neh.gov

If you need help using Grants.gov, contact:

Grants.gov: www.grants.gov
Grants.gov help desk: support@grants.gov
Grants.gov customer support tutorials and manuals: www.grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp
Grant.gov support line: 1-800-518-GRANTS (4726)
Grants.gov troubleshooting tips

VIII. Other Information

Privacy policy

Information in these guidelines is solicited under the authority of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, as amended, 20 U.S.C. 956. The principal purpose for which the information will be used is to process the grant application. The information may also be used for statistical research, analysis of trends, and Congressional oversight. Failure to provide the information may result in the delay or rejection of the application.

Application completion time
The Office of Management and Budget requires federal agencies to supply information on the time needed to complete forms and also to invite comments on the paperwork burden. NEH estimates that the average time to complete this application is fifteen hours per response. This estimate includes time for reviewing instructions, researching, gathering, and maintaining the information needed, and completing and reviewing the application.

Please send any comments regarding the estimated completion time or any other aspect of this application, including suggestions for reducing the completion time, to the Office of Publications, National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C. 20506; and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (3136-0134), Washington, D.C. 20503. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number.
Grant Programs and Deadlines

NEH offers grants in the following categories:

- Challenge Grants
- Education Programs
- Public Programs
- We the People
- Office of Digital Humanities
- Preservation and Access
- Research Programs
- Federal/State Partnership

Learn more about the Divisions and Offices that administer NEH grant programs.

An alphabetical listing of grant programs and deadlines is also available.

Guidelines: To obtain application materials, click on the name of the grant program.

Forms: Links to the forms you will need to complete an application are noted at the beginning of each guideline. In order to download all of the necessary materials, you will need to have the free Adobe Reader installed.

### Challenge Grants
Learn more about the Office of Challenge Grants

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(The We the People Challenge Grants in United States History, Institutions and Culture program has been replaced by Challenge Grants in United States History and Culture.)

Rediscovering

### Afghanistan

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#### Office of Digital Humanities

Learn more about the [Office of Digital Humanities](http://www.neh.gov/grants/grantsbydivision.html)

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#### Education Programs

Learn more about the [Division of Education Programs](http://www.neh.gov/grants/grantsbydivision.html)

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### Workshops for Community College Faculty

- **Landmarks of American History and Culture:**
  - March 16, 2010
  - Summer 2011

- **Picturing America School Collaboration Projects:**
  - October 7, 2010
  - April 2011

- **Summer Seminars and Institutes:**
  - March 2, 2010
  - Summer 2011

- **Rediscovering Afghanistan**

- **Teaching Development Fellowships:**
  - October 4, 2010
  - June 2011

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### Preservation and Access

Learn more about the [Division of Preservation and Access](http://www.neh.gov/grants/grantsbydivision.html)

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Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions  May 18, 2010  January 2011

Rediscovering Afghanistan

Save America's Treasures (administered by the National Park Service)  May 2010  Early 2011

Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections  December 2010  July 2011

Public Programs
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### Federal/State Partnership

Learn more about the Federal/State Partnership

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### We the People

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General response to a General Query about the NSF

Thank you for your message and inquiry. First, consult the NSF’s Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG) – available from the NSF website in a .pdf document - and study it well before crafting your proposal. This guide provides guidance for preparation and submission of proposals to NSF; describes process -- and criteria -- by which proposals will be reviewed; outlines reasons why a proposal may be returned without review; describes process for withdrawals, returns & declinations; describes the award process and procedures for requesting continued support; and identifies significant award and administration processes. The NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide is available at:

Second, as a general rule, proposals that review well at NSF (in Sociology, Political Science, Law and Social Science (LSS), and other social science programs) are those that clearly state a central research question, make an argument that is in dialogue with relevant literatures and debates within them, specify the data you will gather and how you will analyze them, and state what you expect to find/show with your research. Proposals that do well do tend to have a general theoretical discussion (i.e., review of the literature that "situates" the research and explains its theoretical contributions) and a discussion of proposed methodology. Projects designed primarily to “describe,” “expand,” “explore,” or “develop” our understanding of a phenomenon tend to be too preliminary for a successful proposal. Also, the Sociology, Political Science, Law and Social Science Programs do not fund evaluation projects or those with a primarily applied focus. NSF-funded proposals in the social sciences tend to be theoretically framed and make a clear contribution to theory (e.g., sociological theory, political theory, or socio—legal theory). In addition, the strongest proposals have a research design that permits falsifiability--so that you can be wrong as well as right.

Third, you should pay close attention to the NSF review criteria. Through its merit review process, the National Science Foundation (NSF) ensures that proposals submitted are reviewed in a fair, competitive, transparent, and in-depth manner. The merit review process is described in detail in Part I of the NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG). For more information, see the NSF Merit Review Website (http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/meritreview/index.jsp). All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of two National Science Board approved merit review criteria. In some instances, however, NSF will employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities. For example, proposals for large facility projects also might be subject to special review criteria outlined in the program solicitation. The two merit review criteria are listed below. The criteria include considerations that help define them. These considerations are suggestions, and not all will apply to any given proposal. While investigators must address both merit review criteria, reviewers will be asked to address only those considerations that are relevant to the proposal being considered and for which the reviewer is qualified to make judgments.

What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?
How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields? How well qualified is the investigator (individual or team) to conduct the project? (If appropriate, the reviewer will comment on the quality of prior work.)
How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity? Is there sufficient access to
resources? To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts? The NSF Board defines transformative research as "research that has the capacity to revolutionize existing fields, create new subfields, cause paradigm shifts, support discovery, and lead to radically new technologies."

What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity? How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning? How well does the proposed activity broaden the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.)? To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks, and partnerships? Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding? What may be the benefits of the proposed activity to society?

NSF staff will give careful consideration to the following in making funding decisions:

Integration of Research and Education
One of the principal strategies in support of NSF’s goals is to foster integration of research and education through the programs, projects and activities it supports at academic and research institutions. These institutions provide abundant opportunities where individuals may concurrently assume responsibilities as researchers, educators, and students, and where all can engage in joint efforts that infuse education with the excitement of discovery and enrich research through the diversity of learning perspectives.

Integrating Diversity into NSF Programs, Projects, and Activities
Broadening opportunities and enabling the participation of all citizens, women and men, underrepresented minorities, and persons with disabilities, are essential to the health and vitality of science and engineering. NSF is committed to this principle of diversity and deems it central to the programs, projects, and activities it considers and supports.

Fourth, if you are doing (or plan to do) any kind of qualitative data collection, then I recommend that you study the NSF’s 2004 publication and 2008 publication on qualitative research. The former is titled "Workshop on Interdisciplinary Standards for Systematic Qualitative Research" and the later is titled Workshop on the Scientific Foundations of Qualitative Research." Both can be accessed at the NSF website. Overall, these publications provide guidance both to reviewers and investigators about the characteristics of strong qualitative research proposals and the criteria for evaluating projects in NSF’s merit review process. They also provide recommendations to address the broader issue of how to strengthen qualitative methods in the social sciences in general. The workshops were intended to contribute to advancing the quality of qualitative research, and thus to advancing research capacity, tools, and infrastructure in the social sciences.

Fifth, you cannot include letters of “recommendation” unless they are letters from individuals who allow you access to their organization or site to collect data that is needed to do the research. This is a new rule at the NSF. Letters of “recommendation” that praise you as a scholar or celebrate your research skills and productivity are not allowed.

Finally, please familiarize yourself with budget process and be cognizant of what the various programs fund and do not fund. The Sociology, Political Science, and Law and Social Science Programs do not pay for faculty release time or course buyouts. The Sociology and Political
Science Programs only pay for two months of summary salary and the Law and Social Science Program pays for only one month of summer salary. The Sociology program does not support purchase of computers (unless a strong case is made); and does not fund materials and supplies that are routine parts of an office (nor similar expenses like phone etc., that's why universities charge overhead). For all the programs, the amount of your budget should be realistic; reasonable for the work; need established; well justified, and in line with program guidelines. Budgets can support personnel, equipment, travel to research sites to gather data, other participant support, and other direct costs (including consultant services, computer services, and publication costs).

I hope this is helpful. Sincerely, Kevin Gotham.
NSF Merit Review Facts

This section contains some important to know facts about the merit review process.

1. FACT: All proposals submitted to NSF are reviewed according to the two merit review criteria: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts.

DISCUSSION: All proposals submitted to NSF are reviewed utilizing the two merit review criteria: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts. Proposals are returned without review if the Project Summary does not clearly address in separate statements 1) the intellectual merit and 2) the broader impacts of the proposed activity (see Merit Review Broader Impacts Criterion: Representative Activities). In addition to these two merit review criteria, programs may employ additional review criteria, which would be stated in the program solicitation.

2. FACT: NSF Program Officers make recommendations to fund or decline a proposal.

DISCUSSION: Reviewers do not make funding decisions. The analysis and evaluation of proposals by external reviewers provide information to NSF Program Officers in making their recommendations to award or decline a proposal. See Phase II: Proposal Review and Processing.

3. FACT: Most proposals that are awarded do not receive all "Excellent." 

DISCUSSION: It is not true that a proposal must receive all "Excellent" to be funded; in fact, most proposals that are awarded do not receive all "Excellent." Furthermore, even if you get all "Excellent," you may not be funded. See the annual reports to the National Science Board on the National Science Foundation's Merit Review Process for data about proposals and success rates, as well as further information and data concerning the merit review process.

4. FACT: NSF Program Officers are encouraged to recommend "risky" science and engineering for funding.

DISCUSSION: NSF Program Officers are encouraged to recommend for funding proposals that have high potential or payoff, even though they may be considered as being "risky" by external reviewers.

NSF also has several mechanisms in place to promote the funding of 'risky science’. For example, the Grants for Rapid Response Research (RAPID) funding mechanism is used for proposals having a severe urgency with regard to availability of, or access to data, facilities or specialized equipment, including quick-response research on natural or anthropogenic disasters and similar unanticipated events (see GPG, Chapter II.D.1.) In addition, the EARly-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) funding mechanism may be used to support exploratory work in its early stages on untested, but potentially transformative, research ideas or approaches (see GPG, Chapter II.D.2.) NSF is also in the process of implementing a new emphasis on transformative research which includes a modification to the intellectual merit review criteria and the development of a new funding mechanism for "early-concept" research projects. (See Important Notice No. 130: Transformative Research).
5. FACT: Principal Investigators submit on average about 2.1 proposals for every award they receive.

DISCUSSION: A common misconception is that once declined, you will always be declined. However, NSF statistics show that on average, Principal Investigators submit about 2.1 proposals for every award they receive. That is, many Principal Investigators who receive awards also have been declined. See Resubmission process. Another common misconception is that one cannot get funded on a first submission. However, NSF statistics show that, in 2006, 45% of new PIs received their first award on their first attempt.

6. FACT: NSF promotes broadening participation in science and engineering.

DISCUSSION: NSF promotes broadening participation in science and engineering fields. This includes increasing the participation of underrepresented minorities and women, and persons with disabilities. This also includes increasing diversity in the NSF portfolio with respect to types of institutions supported and the geographic regions represented. Broadening participation activities can be developed to address the NSF Broader Impact Merit Review Criterion; however, it is important to note that other activities are also appropriate to address the Broader Impact criterion (see Merit Review Broader Impacts Criterion: Representative Activities).

7. NSF annually has active awards at over 2000 awardee organizations.

DISCUSSION: NSF funds a large number of investigators at over 2000 awardee organizations. If you are most interested in which investigators and institutions receive the awards in your area of expertise, you can easily check using the NSF award database. Use key words to conduct a search of funded projects, or you can search by NSF program. Then check the investigators and institutions named on the award abstract. You can also search the award database by investigator or institution name.
Merit Review Broader Impacts Criterion: Representative Activities

July 2007

Proposals submitted to the National Science Foundation are evaluated through use of two merit review criteria, which all proposals must address explicitly. Experience shows that while most proposers have little difficulty responding to the criterion relating to intellectual merit, many proposers have difficulty understanding how to frame the broader impacts of the activities they propose to undertake.

The Broader Impacts of a proposed activity are important considerations in advancing the NSF Mission: "To promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense; and for other purposes" (NSF Act of 1950). The NSF Strategic Plan provides further background information for Broader Impacts through the NSF Vision, Core Values, Strategic Outcome Goals, and Investment Priorities (NSF Strategic Plan for FY 2006-2011: Investing in America’s Future (NSF 06-48)).

The examples provided below are organized by the set of potential considerations used in assessing the broader impacts of the proposed activity. They illustrate activities that, when successfully incorporated in a project description, will help reviewers and NSF program staff address the broader impacts criterion in the review and decision process. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, nor is any particular example relevant to all proposals. Proposers can draw from the examples but are urged to be creative in their approaches to demonstrating the broader impacts of their projects. Proposers already undertaking similar kinds of activities should carefully consider how to link these examples to the research and education projects they are proposing for funding. Proposers also should consider what types of activities best suit their interests, while enhancing the broader impacts of the project being proposed.

The components of the broader impacts criterion as defined by the National Science Board are listed below. The list is followed by short sections on each component that provide representative activities.

Broader Impacts Criterion: What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?
- How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training and learning?
- How well does the proposed activity broaden the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.)?
- To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks and partnerships?
- Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding?
- What may be the benefits of the proposed activity to society?

Advance Discovery and Understanding While Promoting Teaching, Training and Learning

Examples of Activities:
• Integrate research activities into the teaching of science, math and engineering at all educational levels (e.g., K-12, undergraduate science majors, non-science majors, and graduate students).
• Include students (e.g., K-12, undergraduate science majors, non-science majors, and/or graduate students) as participants in the proposed activities as appropriate.
• Participate in the recruitment, training, and/or professional development of K-12 science and math teachers.
• Develop research-based educational materials or contribute to databases useful in teaching (e.g., K-16 digital library).
• Partner with researchers and educators to develop effective means of incorporating research into learning and education.
• Encourage student participation at meetings and activities of professional societies.
• Establish special mentoring programs for high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, and technicians conducting research.
• Involve graduate and post-doctoral researchers in undergraduate teaching activities.
• Develop, adopt, adapt or disseminate effective models and pedagogic approaches to science, mathematics and engineering teaching.

**Broaden Participation of Underrepresented Groups**

**Examples of Activities:**
• Establish research and education collaborations with students and/or faculty who are members of underrepresented groups.
• Include students from underrepresented groups as participants in the proposed research and education activities.
• Establish research and education collaborations with students and faculty from non-Ph.D.-granting institutions and those serving underrepresented groups.
• Make campus visits and presentations at institutions that serve underrepresented groups.
• Establish research and education collaborations with faculty and students at community colleges, colleges for women, undergraduate institutions, and EPSCoR institutions.
• Mentor early-career scientists and engineers from underrepresented groups who are submitting NSF proposals.
• Participate in developing new approaches (e.g., use of information technology and connectivity) to engage underserved individuals, groups, and communities in science and engineering.
• Participate in conferences, workshops and field activities where diversity is a priority.

**Enhance Infrastructure for Research and Education**

**Examples of Activities:**
• Identify and establish collaborations between disciplines and institutions, among the U.S. academic institutions, industry and government and with international partners.
• Stimulate and support the development and dissemination of next-generation instrumentation, multi-user facilities, and other shared research and education
platforms.
• Maintain, operate and modernize shared research and education infrastructure, including facilities and science and technology centers and engineering research centers.
• Upgrade the computation and computing infrastructure, including advanced computing resources and new types of information tools (e.g., large databases, networks and associated systems, and digital libraries).
• Develop activities that ensure that multi-user facilities are sites of research and mentoring for large numbers of science and engineering students.

Broad Dissemination to Enhance Scientific and Technological Understanding

Examples of Activities:
• Partner with museums, nature centers, science centers, and similar institutions to develop exhibits in science, math, and engineering.
• Involve the public or industry, where possible, in research and education activities.
• Give science and engineering presentations to the broader community (e.g., at museums and libraries, on radio shows, and in other such venues.).
• Make data available in a timely manner by means of databases, digital libraries, or other venues such as CD-ROMs.
• Publish in diverse media (e.g., non-technical literature, and websites, CD-ROMs, press kits) to reach broad audiences.
• Present research and education results in formats useful to policy-makers, members of Congress, industry, and broad audiences.
• Participate in multi- and interdisciplinary conferences, workshops, and research activities.
• Integrate research with education activities in order to communicate in a broader context.

Benefits to Society

Examples of Activities:
• Demonstrate the linkage between discovery and societal benefit by providing specific examples and explanations regarding the potential application of research and education results.
• Partner with academic scientists, staff at federal agencies and with the private sector on both technological and scientific projects to integrate research into broader programs and activities of national interest.
• Analyze, interpret, and synthesize research and education results in formats understandable and useful for non-scientists.
• Provide information for policy formulation by Federal, State or local agencies.
Chronicle of Higher Education


Debunking Some Myths About Grant Writing

By Kenneth T. Henson

Grant writing is all about power. We write grants because they bring us prestige, programs, equipment, travel, and time. Grants free us to do the kind of research, teaching, and service that we enjoy most. So why is such an essential skill so difficult and so mysterious for so many academics?

You can be as successful as you want to be with grant writing, but you have to realize that it's a craft, and like any other craft, being successful at it requires developing and polishing a few skills. It starts with attitude. You must believe in your own ability to master this craft and to succeed at the level you choose. Then you must have some clear reasons for writing grants. As the Cheshire cat told Alice, if you don't know where you are going then it doesn't matter which direction you take. So, begin by taking a step backward and asking yourself, Where do I want to go in my career? Five years from now? Ten years from now? Grant writing can be a powerful force to get you there.

In the past two decades, I've written millions of dollars worth of successful grant proposals and traveled the country giving workshops on grant writing. I've encountered a lot of myths about this subject, and believing them can, and often does, derail even the brightest professor's grant-writing program. I'd like to tackle a few of the myths and then offer some tips.

Myth 1: There is no money available; the grant-writing well has dried up. Wrong! Money is tighter these days but there is still hundreds of millions of dollars waiting to be taken. Furthermore, those who are entrusted with dispersing this money are just as eager to give it away as we are to receive it.

Myth 2: The money that is available goes to big, prestigious institutions, not to individuals or to small institutions. That statement is half true. Enormous amounts of money are given to the same institutions, year after year. But it is not simply because grant agencies are impressed with the institutions' prestigious names. It is because certain individuals at those institutions have proved themselves good stewards of the money. Furthermore, small institutions and people who are "unknown" to the general public are getting hundreds of millions of dollars. But these people are not so unknown to the grant agencies. They have established reputations for delivering quality service and managing their budgets wisely -- two skills that you can easily master.

Myth 3: Successful grant writing requires connections, and I don't have any. This excuse begs for rebuttal. Connections can help but they aren't required. What's required is the ability to craft a quality proposal that will convince grant givers that you will give the most and best in return for their money. You can do this by keeping one eye on the foundation's request for proposals (RFP) to make sure that you have addressed each of its goals in your application.
A second way to ensure that you submit a quality proposal is to ask the grant agency for a copy of the rating form it uses. Be sure to cover all of the points on which your proposal will be evaluated, and do an especially convincing job on the parts that count the most.

If you still believe that successful grant writing requires connections -- and without doubt, they can help sway the evaluation -- then why not develop some connections? Volunteer your services as a proposal evaluator. This will give you valuable insight into the process and let you inside the heads of those who will be evaluating your future proposals. Or just pick up the phone and call the grant agency. Be prepared to talk about your unique strengths and listen carefully to pick up on any additional expectations that may not be included in the RFP.

Myth 4: Meeting the deadline is the most important goal of a successful grant writer. Not exactly. The two most important goals are to produce a top-quality proposal and target it to the right grant agency. Far too many professors succumb to the urge to put deadlines ahead of everything else. Resist firing off 11th-hour proposals to meet a last-minute deadline. Slow down, produce a quality proposal, and submit it to the agency next year or submit it to a similar agency now.

Myth 5: Collaborating with colleagues will give more time for grant writing. Unfortunately, just the opposite is true. Collaborating on a grant actually requires more time than writing one alone. This does not mean that collaboration is bad. But if you decide to pursue a grant with colleagues, take time from the outset to clarify the roles of all participants. Above all, choose partners who are compatible and who have similar work habits. Choose self-motivated, Type A personalities. People with Type B personalities won't get beyond talking about grant writing anyway, so it really doesn't matter whether they choose to collaborate.

Myth 6: Grants are awarded to those applicants with the greatest needs. Most grants go to applicants whose proposals seem most likely to deliver services and meet the agency's goals better than all other applicants. So, instead of focusing on your needs, focus on how your strengths can meet the grant agency's goals. What unique attributes do you, your institution, and your region have that can be used to excel at meeting those goals?

Buying into any of these myths can keep success at arm's length for many grant writers. In addition to safeguarding against them, perhaps you can also benefit from the following tips:

Tip 1: Make sure that your proposal contains all of the essential parts. At a minimum, each proposal should include a transmittal letter, a title page, an abstract, a table of contents, a list of objectives, a timetable, a budget, and a plan for evaluating your program.

- A transmittal letter is a one- to two-page letter signed by the senior officer at your institution assuring that the institution supports the proposal. The letter should contain the president's telephone number, fax number, and address.
- Your title page should contain the project's title, your institution's name, and the date. Make sure that it responds to the purposes stated in the RFP.
- The abstract should be short and clear. It is an opportunity to sell your idea; so, use it accordingly.
- The purposes, goals, and objectives section offers a second opportunity to present your proposal's strengths.
• An often-overlooked tool is the timetable. Although many RFPs do not ask for a timetable, all grant agencies want to know when you promise to deliver on their goals. A good flow chart can help. Also, be sure and say how you can sustain your program once the grant expires.

• The proposed budget deserves special attention. Be sure it is adequate to do the job but not excessive. The most important parts of the project should be allocated the most money. Be sure to offer in-kind contributions; the more the better. Also, you might consider offering a special feature to enrich the offerings of your proposal but one that also can be deleted during negotiations, without damaging the rest of the proposal.

Tip 2: Clarity is everything. Because so many proposals are poorly written, I devoted a full chapter to writing style in my new book, Grant Writing in Higher Education: A Step-by-Step Guide. For grants, the best style is straightforward and simple. Avoid unnecessary jargon, long paragraphs, long sentences, and unfamiliar words. Consciously or unconsciously, many grant writers try to impress their readers with unfamiliar phrases, high-toned language, and complex writing. This is all wrong: By far, the best proposals are also the clearest.

Tip 2: Mention unique qualities. Because they receive so many applications, program evaluators often face the dilemma of having to choose from among several excellent proposals. This gives a distinct advantage to any proposal that has a unique (and memorable) feature. For example, you might know a distinguished expert whom you could use as a consultant to give your grant additional credibility, or your town might have some businesses, social institutions, or industries that would contribute to the effectiveness of your proposal. Accentuate those assets.

Tip 4: Talk the talk, then walk the walk. Professors often ask whether they should use trendy language. My answer is yes, but only if you can show how your proposals will live up to the promises suggested by that language. For example, at one time, the most common word to appear in education-reform proposals was "rigor." So when writing a proposal to finance a series of summer institutes for physics teachers, I claimed that my proposed program would be rigorous. Then, I planned into every participant's schedule 12 credit hours of physics. That's a heavy load to take during the summer. Because of this and a few other unique qualities, the proposal was supported, again and again, beating out the competition four years in a row.

Tip 5: Remain flexible. Sometimes writers become so attached to their articles, books, or grant proposals that they are unwilling to alter their work, even when asked to do so by potential publishers or grant agencies. That can be a big mistake. Grant agencies seldom award the full budget you request without asking for a few adjustments in the proposal. Perhaps a healthy outlook on this is, "If I was creative enough to produce something that a foundation wishes to support, I am creative enough to find ways to meet both its goals and mine."

Tip 6: Take steps to make sure your grant gets renewed. Once a proposal is granted, the time has arrived to begin working to ensure that it stays that way. Start by collecting artifacts that attest to the quality of the job you have done. Consider the level of evidence of each artifact. For example, a handwritten note that says "Thanks" is evidence but it is not as good as a letter written on official letterhead thanking you for the outstanding job you did.

I have one final piece of advice. Most institutions have fallen on hard times. Instead of worrying about your needs, search for a grant agency that supports needs that are similar to yours and then
carefully craft a proposal that assures the evaluators that, if given the opportunity, you will out-perform your competition on meeting the organization's goals. Should your proposal be rejected, realize that in grant writing, rejection is an essential step to success. Just take a deep breath and rewrite your proposal, making it irresistible to the next evaluators.

Kenneth T. Henson is dean of the School of Education at the Citadel and author of a new book on grant writing in higher education.
Proposal writing is a genre of its own. If rhetoric is the craft of persuasion, proposal writing is especially so. The goal is to persuade reviewers that the proposed project has the special merit to deserve funding—that the project will stand out as novel and significant, and that the methodology will be recognized as careful and thorough. Whatever the project may mean to the author of the proposal, it is for the reviewers inseparable from the language in which it is presented. In the economy of proposal writing, every element must contribute to the argument and to the idiom of persuasion.

Like essays or articles written for publication, a proposal is an integral part of the scholar’s professional life. Unlike essays or articles, though, the proposal is addressed to readers who focus their attention on whether the described project is the one to support. While the professional article constitutes the dissemination stage in the process of scholarly communication, the proposal belongs at the production end. The author asks the reviewers to select the project under review for funding that will help bring the project to fruition.

There is no one-size-fits-all formula for success in this genre. At the same time, however, certain fundamental rhetorical points should inform one’s choice of the most effective language and organizational structure to argue for your proposed work. The following remarks speak to those points.

AUDIENCES

When a scholar submits an application to ACLS, it is not filed away in a giant database, never to be seen again. Rather, submission of an application is the start of a substantial peer reviewed selection process in which diligent readers give the application their fairest consideration and judgment.

These reviewers are the proposal writer’s audience. It is important for the applicant to try to enter into the thinking of those reviewing one’s application, and to understand how it may be read. The structure of ACLS competitions is suggestive in this regard: The first-round reviewers are in the discipline of the applicants—or represent the range of disciplines that are the ingredients of an interdisciplinary project—though in any case may represent specific areas or subfields quite different from those of the applicant. The second-round reviewers, who meet as a selection committee, represent a number of disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. In sum, each of the reviewers judging any given application will have differing levels of familiarity with the particulars of the research represented by that application. The tricky task for the applicant is to find the
right tone and deploy a strategy that will persuade them all.

It is easy to imagine the audiences one is addressing because they are already familiar: The reviewers are colleagues, in a broad sense, sharing with the writer general academic experience and professional awareness. Reviewers from within one's discipline could be thought of as colleagues from down the hall; those from outside one's discipline would more closely resemble colleagues from across campus. With a clear sense of who these audiences are, the proposal writer can speak confidently and persuasively about the nature and value of the proposed project, avoiding narrow, issue-specific language. This does not require “dumbing down” one's work but it does require pitching the issues at a level of generality sufficient to making them clear to the general scholarly reader.

Projects in some disciplines of the humanities, such as philosophy of physics or formal semantics in linguistics, may seem further afield from the rest of the humanities than do other projects. How might such projects appeal to reviewers in other, less technically-oriented areas in the humanities? Applicants in these and similar disciplines must aim to introduce their projects at a level conducive to understanding by the intelligent layperson—and to speak to the relevance of their main claims and arguments for other, more familiar concerns (whether historical or contemporary) of scholars in the rest of the humanities. This is something of an exercise in translation and, as such, a classic element of proposal writing that transcends the technical nature characteristic of such proposed projects.

Just as important, if not more so, is the need to avoid jargon. The reviewers, whether they represent particular fields or the humanities and social sciences in general, are assumed to share something of a common language. Nothing turns off a reviewer like language that seems purposefully to obfuscate or exclude.

STRATEGIES AND STRUCTURES

There is no one strategy for writing proposals, no prescription, no single all-purpose format or outline. Each applicant must develop her or his own rhetorical and argumentative strategy. Audience awareness, sureness of voice, and clarity and cogency in stating the question at hand are essential. Yet a proposal can be carried through in any number of ways. At all events, the applicant should use the beginning paragraphs to announce his or her voice, clearly establish the main question to be pursued, and set up the reader's expectations regarding the principal research statement of the proposal—the central claim—and how it will be explained. It is here that the proposal writer must grab audience attention and enunciate the main question and central claim quickly and effectively.

Some prominent proposal writing strategies—which may be used in combination—are described in the appendix.

The applicant should argue for the project and organize the proposal in a way that best matches the kind of project, the proposed approach, and his or her scholarly background. A project whose aim is to develop a conceptual framework for analyzing a particular historical or social phenomenon, or a literary, cultural, or artistic genre, or a philosophical, economic, or legal claim, might devote a significant proportion of the proposal to explaining, contextualizing, and assessing prior approaches. What is useful, flawed, or missing?

Are the main stakes of the discipline—and, thereby, the significance of the questions asked in the proposed project—likely to be unfamiliar to scholars in other disciplines in the humanities and social scientists? A proposal for a study of a poorly
understood language group might well inform non-specialists of the importance of the relevant terms of analysis and suggest how the languages in question reflect a particular history.

Does the proposed project reflect a novel or special technical approach or unusual, hard-won data? A scholar who has done extensive field or archival research, or has refined a set of tools, or has trained in a special research skill might allocate some portion of the proposal to explaining how the nature of those experiences, tools, or skills shape a new approach of the proposed book or article.

One kind of proposal might take the form of a single prose statement, without sections delineated according to the application guidelines. Another kind might briefly introduce the major question and then move to a list of aims that provide an explanatory structure. A third kind might offer a more expanded introductory section, followed by a chapter by chapter summary demonstrating how each contributes to the major thesis. Still another kind might cast the entire proposal into sub-sections: an introduction or overview, methodology, plan of work, and so on. How the structure is fashioned is a matter of personal preference and one’s judgment as to how to best to put forth the argument.

The applicant should keep in mind that the reviewer is likely to be reading a tall stack of proposals. This heightens the importance of being clear, persuasive, and economical whatever strategy is followed—and answering all the questions regarding how the work will be done. The reviewers want to know why a particular methodology is appropriate for the questions being asked, how the research will be carried out, what has already been accomplished what time frame is envisioned for completion.

SIGNIFICANCE: THE BIG PICTURE

Proposal writing entails advocacy on various levels. The author of the proposal advocates not only for the proposed work in the context of his/her discipline, but also for the value of that work in the larger context of the humanities as a whole. Thus, applicants to ACLS Fellowship competitions are asked to explain, in a separate paragraph, the project’s significance to scholars across the humanities and related disciplines—that is, to scholars in humanities disciplines aside from one’s own. Even if this paragraph is written after the proposal is drafted, consideration of the broad significance of the work for other fields should help guide the planning of the proposal and how one’s work speaks to various levels of interest.

One of the proposal writer’s tasks is to explain the ways in which the project speaks to questions specific to the various formations of the humanities—disciplines, sub-fields, interdisciplinary emphases. Another task is to demonstrate to the reviewers a capacity to consider the big picture. What does this big picture look like—and how do specialized or formal or technical modes of humanities or social science research fit into that big picture? While there are no formulaic answers, the proposal writer will do well to start with the basic question: how would I explain my topic and why is it significant to another scholar with humanities training who is well versed in his or her domain and the general course of human heritage and civilization but knows nothing of my own discipline? The answers to such a question might touch on specific points of dialogue or dynamics among particular disciplines. It is important, at all events, to outline how one’s topic, as a significant scholarly pursuit within the given discipline (or interdisciplinary framework) relates to others—for example, to say how a specific moment in French art history, the syntax of Maori, a grasp of poetic form, philosophical understanding of natural kinds, or the history of the Seleucids, relate to their
broader disciplinary landscape and, as a result, to
the humanities disciplines taken as a whole. It can
be a challenge to articulate the substantive con-
nection between the refined level of discussion and
analysis of a project cast in disciplinary terms and
the broader topography of the humanities. Here is
another place to discuss one’s project with scholars
in other disciplines.

THE SCHOLAR AND THE PROJECT:
DANCER AND DANCE

Like the dancer and the dance, the scholar and the
project are always to some degree inseparable. One
of the reviewer’s main tasks is to gauge, not only
the scholar and the proposed project individually
but also how well they fit each other.

Many elements in the entire application
packet identify the applicant to the reviewer: the
scholar’s home department(s), Ph.D. discipline,
references, and so on. But identities are not
enclosed disciplinary boxes. The ACLS application
form asks applicants to define themselves by field,
and a number of spaces are provided for answering
the question. With the advantage of multiple boxes,
one scholar may define herself as first a political
theorist, second a historian of ideas, third a historian
of the United States, and so on; another scholar
may identify himself with art history, classics,
archaeology, architectural studies, and history.
Such complex definitions are helpful in the process
of sorting proposals for review—but just as impor-
tant, they help guide the applicant in answering
the fundamental question: “Why am I the best
person to do this project?”

Of all the elements in the application, the
proposal affords the applicant the most straight-
forward opportunity to describe the connections
between the dancer and the dance: How does the
project relate to who the applicant is, professionally?
Where does the applicant place the work on the

scholarly map? How does the applicant describe
the intellectual territory in which s/he proposes to
work? In response, a film researcher might write
that his work grows out of earlier concerns with
cinema and modernity; a literature scholar might
state that she found in an earlier project on book
design and the novel the intersections of high and
low culture that she now wishes to pursue more
directly; a historian of mercantilism in China
might suggest how a trajectory of research in two
earlier books has brought him to his current project;
and so on. Such statements add context, identify
relevant expertise and skills, and help establish
conceptual relationships and pathways that may
suggest why that scholar is best suited to take on
that project.

Addressing these questions need not wed
the applicant to a particular intellectual frame-
work or disciplinary outlook. Rather, the goals of
any such compelling account relating the project to
the scholar are to demonstrate the scholar’s grasp
of the field; to suggest a coherent, knowledgeable,
and confident sense of self; and to indicate that the
applicant is the right person to do the job and the
right person to tell the reviewers what needs to be
done.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Some additional, cautionary remarks are in order:
It is very difficult, if not impossible, to write a suc-
cessful proposal when the deadline is only days
away. It is best to start early. It may take longer than
expected, even with a core proposal in hand that
was written for an earlier competition and suitable
for adapting for the ACLS competition. One needs
time to edit, think, and re-edit; to ask colleagues
for their frank judgment of the draft proposal; and
then to edit once again. All these steps may take
substantial time.
Now fast forward to another spring. The proposal has been out of the scholar’s hands for five or more months, but the project itself has not. It is still there, and so it will remain. Whatever news the letter brings regarding the fate of the proposal, the scholar should still look to his or her research as worthy of further development. Next year will bring another competition with another group of readers and another applicant pool. The applicant who does not succeed in one competition year should plan to enter the competition in subsequent years.

APPENDIX: POSSIBLE PROPOSAL STRATEGIES

QUESTIONS IN THE FIELD

All proposals should in some way address questions raised in the field of study, whether defined as the discipline, some particular territory within the discipline, or an area that moves across disciplinary boundaries. Perhaps the most common strategy is the effective reference to focused, easily recognizable, and previously unaddressed or inadequately addressed questions in the field: State the question and explain how the project will answer that question. It is not sufficient to identify an important question that has not been asked before or that has been inadequately answered, or to propose a new perspective on an old problem: one must note why the question has been inadequately answered to date, or why a new perspective is needed.

A proposal for a project on Bambara art might explain that the spiritually-imbued artifacts of that tradition have not been adequately examined in terms of their social value; a second line of explanation might focus more broadly on the connections between visual culture, spiritual traditions, and social currency—and lay out the specific goals of the proposed book. A proposal on class in modern French literature might first state that while class is a dominant theme in the period, no one has explored its appearance in the particular genre the applicant will explore. The applicant might go on to suggest that the proposed work will explain how these accounts of class reveal regional differences in French literature of the day, political concerns regarding social stability, and the dynamics of literary schools in the period.

SNAPSHOTS AND STORIES

Snapshots and short stories can be very effective in attracting a reviewer’s attention to a proposal. In a proposal on hidden dimensions of a ritual, a religious studies scholar might offer a vignette of Central American women praying to a surrogate deity; a geographer might offer a snapshot of a leisure fishing community in urban New Jersey to show how members of a working class immigrant group retain connections with their natural environment. Similarly, an economic historian proposing to interpret the development of water rights management in Southeast Asia might offer a thumbnail account of monsoon damage to agriculture in the Mekong Delta. A literature scholar might offer a series of Latin epigraphs prefacing modern works to illustrate a point about the links authors attempt to establish between their own writings and those of classical figures. A music theorist might recount the recent history of interpretations of musical expression in order to set the context for an account of a proposed new mode of analysis. In these examples, the snapshot or story is short (rarely longer than one paragraph) but dramatic—setting the stage for the investigation to come by giving the reviewer a concrete reference point.

INTELLECTUAL AND SCHOLARLY TRAJECTORY

As establishing a connection between scholar and project is essential to a successful proposal, an
emphasis on the intellectual and scholarly terrain previously covered by the writer may serve as an effective framework for presenting the proposed research and writing project. This strategy may suit the scholar who already has significant publications in a particular area and whose new project, while at a less advanced stage, is demonstrably related to the earlier work. The anthropologist who has written a well-received book on the commodification of “folk” objects in Asia now turns to the effects of the global marketplace on similar tendencies in another region where s/he has the appropriate language and cultural expertise. Similarly, the dance historian who has published an important book on mid-twentieth-century choreography now examines innovations of the explosive subsequent decades in dance.

Although the applicant must demonstrate that the new work take the earlier projects as a starting point, and will cultivate new ground, reviewers expect that most scholars’ careers reveal patterns of interest and expertise. Thus, even an early career applicant seeking support for the first book or a set of journal articles might well refer back to the dissertation—the single largest project that s/he has accomplished—and explain how the book or articles will take further, and possibly in new directions, the earlier body of research. In this vein, an applicant might draw the reviewer’s attention to new layers of detail, expanded discussion, newly-drawn relationships, or freshly emerging questions arising out of the earlier work.

ENDNOTES


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This essay derives from her personal experience in advising humanities scholars and should not be taken as reflective of the views or policies of ACLS.
The Art of Writing Proposals
By Adam Przeworski and Frank Salomon

Writing proposals for research funding is a peculiar facet of North American academic culture, and as with all things cultural, its attributes rise only partly into public consciousness. A proposal’s overt function is to persuade a committee of scholars that the project shines with the three kinds of merit all disciplines value, namely, conceptual innovation, methodological rigor, and rich, substantive content. But to make these points stick, a proposal writer needs a feel for the unspoken customs, norms, and needs that govern the selection process itself. These are not really as arcane or ritualistic as one might suspect. For the most part, these customs arise from the committee’s efforts to deal in good faith with its own problems: incomprehension among disciplines, work overload, and the problem of equitably judging proposals that reflect unlike social and academic circumstances.

Writing for committee competition is an art quite different from research work itself. After long deliberation, a committee usually has to choose among proposals that all possess the three virtues mentioned above. Other things being equal, the proposal that is awarded funding is the one that gets its merits across more forcefully because it addresses these unspoken needs and norms as well as the overt rules. The purpose of these pages is to give competitors for Council fellowships and funding a more even start by making explicit some of those normally unspoken customs and needs.

Capture the Reviewer’s Attention?
While the form and the organization of a proposal are matters of taste, you should choose your form bearing in mind that every proposal reader constantly scans for clear answers to three questions:
- What are we going to learn as the result of the proposed project that we do not know now?
- Why is it worth knowing?
- How will we know that the conclusions are valid?

Working through a tall stack of proposals on voluntarily-donated time, a committee member rarely has time to comb proposals for hidden answers. So, say what you have to say immediately, crisply, and forcefully. The opening paragraph, or the first page at most, is your chance to grab the reviewer’s attention. Use it. This is the moment to overstate, rather than understate, your point or question. You can add the conditions and caveats later.

Questions that are clearly posed are an excellent way to begin a proposal: Are strong party systems conducive to democratic stability? Was the decline of population growth in Brazil the result of government policies? These should not be rhetorical questions; they have effect precisely because the answer is far from obvious. Stating your central point, hypothesis, or interpretation is also a good way to begin:
Workers do not organize unions; unions organize workers. The success, and failure, of Corazon Aquino’s revolution stems from its middle-class origins. Population growth coupled with loss of arable land poses a threat to North African food security in the next decade.

Obviously some projects are too complex and some conceptualizations too subtle for such telegraphic messages to capture. Sometimes only step-by-step argumentation can define the central problem. But even if you adopt this strategy, do not fail to leave the reviewer with something to remember: some message that will remain after reading many other proposals and discussing them for hours and hours. She’s the one who claims that Argentina never had a liberal democratic tradition is how you want to be referred to during the committee’s discussion, not Oh yes, she’s the one from Chicago.
Aim for Clarity

Remember that most proposals are reviewed by multidisciplinary committees. A reviewer studying a proposal from another field expects the proposer to meet her halfway. After all, the reader probably accepted the committee appointment because of the excitement of surveying other people's ideas. Her only reward is the chance that proposals will provide a lucidly-guided tour of various disciplines' research frontiers. Don't cheat the reviewer of this by inflicting a tiresome trek through the duller idiosyncrasies of your discipline. Many disciplines have parochial traditions of writing in pretentious jargon. You should avoid jargon as much as you can, and when technical language is really needed, restrict yourself to those new words and technical terms that truly lack equivalents in common language. Also, keep the spotlight on ideas. An archeologist should argue the concepts latent in the ceramic typology more than the typology itself, a historian the tendency latent in the mass of events, and so forth. When additional technical material is needed, or when the argument refers to complex ancillary material, putting it into appendices decongests the main text.

Establish the Context

Your proposal should tell the committee not only what will be learned as a result of your project, but what will be learned that somebody else does not already know. It is essential that the proposal summarize the current state of knowledge and provide an up-to-date, comprehensive bibliography. Both should be precise and succinct. They need not constitute a review of the literature but a sharply focused view of the specific body or bodies of knowledge to which you will add. Committees often treat bibliographies as a sign of seriousness on the part of the applicant, and some members will put considerable effort into evaluating them. A good bibliography testifies that the author did enough preparatory work to make sure the project will complement and not duplicate other people's efforts. Many proposals fail because the references are incomplete or outdated. Missing even a single reference can be very costly if it shows failure to connect with research directly relevant to one's own. Proposal writers with limited library resources are urged to correspond with
colleagues and libraries elsewhere in the early stages of research planning. Resource
guides such as Dissertation Abstracts International and Social Science Periodical
Index are highly recommended. For many disciplines, annual reviews (e.g., Annual
Review of Anthropology) offer state-of-the-art discussions and rich bibliographies.
Some disciplines have bibliographically-oriented journals, for example Review of
Economic Literature and Contemporary Sociology. There are also valuable area
studies-oriented guides: Handbook of Latin American Studies, International African
Bibliography, etc. Familiarizing yourself with them can save days of research.
Powerful bibliographic searches can be run on CD-ROM databases such as the
Social Science Citations Index, Social Sciences Index, and Modern Language
Association International Index. Also, on-line databases such as CARL and ERIC,
available by library or network access, greatly increase your bibliographic reach.

What's the Payoff?
Disciplinary norms and personal tastes in justifying research activities differ greatly.
Some scholars are swayed by the statement that it has not been studied (e.g., an
historian may argue that no book has been written about a particular event, and
therefore one is needed), while other scholars sometimes reflect that there may be a
good reason why not. Nevertheless, the fact that less is known about one's own
chosen case, period, or country than about similar ones may work in the proposer's
favor. Between two identical projects, save that one concerns Egypt and the other
the Sudan, reviewers are likely to prefer the latter. Citing the importance of the
events that provide the subject matter is another and perhaps less dubious appeal.
Turning points, crucial breakthroughs, central personages, fundamental institutions,
and similar appeals to the significance of the object of research are sometimes
effective if argued rather than merely asserted. Appealing to current importance may
also work: e.g., democratic consolidation in South America, the aging population in
industrialized countries, the relative decline of the hegemony of the United States.
It's crucial to convince readers that such topics are not merely timely, but that their
current urgency provides a window into some more abiding problem. Among many
social scientists, explicit theoretical interest counts heavily as a point of merit. Theoretical exposition need not go back to the axiomatic bases of the discipline, proposal readers will have a reasonable interdisciplinary breadth, but it should situate the local problem in terms of its relevance to live, sometimes controversial, theoretical currents. Help your reader understand where the problem intersects the main theoretical debates in your field and show how this inquiry puts established ideas to the test or offers new ones. Good proposals demonstrate awareness of alternative viewpoints and argue the author's position in such a way as to address the field broadly, rather than developing a single sectarian tendency indifferent to alternatives.

**Use a Fresh Approach**

Surprises, puzzles, and apparent contradictions can powerfully persuade the reviewer whose disciplinary superego enforces a commitment to systematic model building or formal theorizing: Given its long-standing democratic traditions, Chile was expected to return to democracy before other countries in the Southern Cone, and yet . . . Is it because these traditions were already extinct by 1973 or because the assumption on which this prediction was based is false? Everyone expected that One Big Union—the slogan of the movement—would strike and win wage increases for workers. Yet statistical evidence shows just the contrary: strong unions do not strike but instead restrain workers' wage demands.

It is often worthwhile to help readers understand how the research task grows from the intellectual history or current intellectual life of the country or region that generated it. Council committees strive to build linkages among an immense diversity of national and international intellectual traditions, and members come from various countries and schools of thought. Many committee members are interested in the interplay of diverse traditions. In fact, the chance to see intellectual history in the making is another reason people accept committee membership. It is a motive to which proposals can legitimately appeal.
It pays to remember that topics of current salience, both theoretical and in the so-called real world, are likely to be a crowded field. The competitors will be more numerous and the competition less interesting than in truly unfamiliar terrain. Unless you have something original to say about them, you may be well advised to avoid topics typically styled of central interest to the discipline. Usually these are topics about which everyone is writing, and the reason is that somebody else has already made the decisive and exciting contribution. By the time you write your proposal, obtain funding, do the research, and write it up, you might wish you were working on something else. So if your instinct leads you to a problem far from the course that the pack is running, follow it, not the pack: nothing is more valuable than a really fresh beginning.

Describe Your Methodology
Methodological canons are largely discipline-specific and vary widely even within some disciplines. But two things can safely be said about methodological appeal. First, the proposal must specify the research operations you will undertake and the way you will interpret the results of these operations in terms of your central problem. Do not just tell what you mean to achieve, tell how you will spend your time while doing it. Second, a methodology is not just a list of research tasks but an argument as to why these tasks add up to the best attack on the problem. An agenda by itself will normally not suffice because the mere listing of tasks to perform does not prove that they add up to the best feasible approach.

Some popularly-used phrases fall short of identifying recognizable research operations. For example, I will look at the relation between x and y is not informative. We know what is meant when an ornithologist proposes to look at a bird, but looking at a relation between variables is something one only does indirectly, by operations like digging through dusty archive boxes, interviewing, observing and taking standardized notes, collecting and testing statistical patterns, etc. How will you tease the relationship of underlying forces from the mass of
experience? The process of gathering data and moving from data to interpretation tends to follow disciplinary customs, more standard in some fields than in others; help readers from other fields recognize what parts of your methodology are standard, which are innovative. Be as specific as you possibly can be about the activities you plan to undertake to collect information, about the techniques you will use to analyze it, and about the tests of validity to which you commit yourself. Most proposals fail because they leave reviewers wondering what the applicant will actually do. Tell them! Specify the archives, the sources, the respondents, and the proposed techniques of analysis.

A research design proposing comparison between cases often has special appeal. In a certain sense all research is comparative because it must use, implicitly or explicitly, some point of reference. Making the comparison explicit raises its value as scientific inquiry. In evaluating a comparative proposal, readers ask whether the cases are chosen in such a way that their similarities and differences illuminate the central question. And is the proposer in a position to execute both legs of the comparison? When both answers are positive, the proposal may fare particularly well.

The proposal should prove that the researcher either possesses, or cooperates with people who possess, mastery of all the technical matters the project entails. For example, if a predominantly literary project includes an inquiry into the influence of the Tupian language on rural Brazilian Portuguese, the proposal will be checked for the author’s background in linguistics and/or Indian languages, or the author’s arrangements to collaborate with appropriate experts.

Specify Your Objectives
A well-composed proposal, like a sonata, usually ends by alluding to the original theme. How will research procedures and their products finally connect with the central question? How will you know if your idea was wrong or right? In some disciplines this imperative traditionally means holding to the strict canon of the
 falsifiable hypothesis. While respecting this canon, committee members are also open to less formal approaches. What matters is to convince readers that something is genuinely at stake in the inquiry, that it is not tendentiously moving toward a preconceived end, and that this leaven of the unknown will yield interesting, orderly propositions.

Proposals should normally describe the final product of the project: an article, book, chapter, dissertation, etc. If you have specific plans, it often helps to spell them out, because specifying the kind of journal in which you hope to publish, or the kind of people you hope to address, will help readers understand what might otherwise look like merely odd features of the proposal. While planning and drafting your proposal, you should keep in mind the program guidelines and application procedures outlined in the brochure specific to the Council program to which you are applying. If you have specific questions about the program, you may wish to consult with a staff member. Your final proposal should include all requested enclosures and appendices.

Final Note
To write a good proposal takes a long time. Start early. Begin thinking about your topic well in advance and make it a habit to collect references while you work on other tasks. Write a first draft at least three months in advance, revise it, show it to colleagues. Let it gather a little dust, collect colleagues’ comments, revise it again. If you have a chance, share it with a seminar or similar group; the debate should help you anticipate what reviewers will eventually think. Revise the text again for substance. Go over the language, style, and form. Resharpen your opening paragraph or first page so that it drives home exactly what you mean as effectively as possible.

Good luck.