



Partnership Case Studies

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

The National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency, supports scholarship, education, and public programs in the humanities. It funds research, education, museum exhibitions, documentaries, preservation, and activities of the state humanities councils. As part of the Endowment's support for research, it provides funding for fellowship programs to selected U.S. institutions that support humanities research in foreign countries. This funding helps to widen access to these institutions and ensures opportunities for humanities scholars in the international research arena, where other public and private funders often give higher priority to projects in social sciences, policy studies, or economic development.

Only tax-exempt, nonprofit institutions financed, governed, and administered independently of institutions of higher education qualify for this funding. Since the purpose of Endowment support is to enhance existing fellowship programs by providing additional fellowships for humanities scholars, eligibility is further limited to institutions that have established and maintained fellowship programs with their own or other private funding. NEH guidelines stipulate that grantee institutions use competitive selection procedures to award NEH fellowships. Long-term fellowship opportunities (lasting four months or longer) get first priority. The program seeks to increase opportunities for humanities scholars to conduct research on foreign cultures and gain access to resources provided by independent libraries, research centers, and international research organizations. NEH fellowships awarded by grantee institutions enable individual scholars to pursue their own research and to participate in the interchange of ideas with other scholars. During FY 1999, NEH funds awarded in previous fiscal years supported 64 humanities scholars conducting research in libraries,

archives, and museums in 21 countries. Private gifts generated by NEH offers of matching funds supported the equivalent of four additional year-long fellowships.

FY 2000 awards for fellowship programs included grants to one U.S. international research organization and six U.S. overseas research centers, and amendments to grants made in previous years to the same international research organization and one other international research organization; the increased funding will allow these institutions to offer the equivalent of 108 year-long fellowships over the next three years. During FY 2000, NEH funds awarded in previous years supported 68 humanities scholars conducting research in libraries, archives, and museums in 32 countries.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has been given “solicit and invest” authority by the Congress. What does this mean and what does this do for NEH and its international fellowship programs?

In 1998 Congress granted NEH the authority “to solicit, accept, receive, and invest in the name of the United States, gifts, bequests, or devises of money or other property or services and to use such in furtherance of [NEH] functions . . .” (105 P.L. 83, Sec. 330). NEH places the proceeds into an interest-bearing account for the purposes specified. The NEH Enterprise Office establishes strategic partnerships with private and public organizations and individuals to benefit NEH’s core programs and special initiatives. The Office seeks funding from corporations, foundations, and individuals across the nation to supplement the agency’s annual Congressional appropriation through charitable contributions, grants, and corporate partnerships. NEH is in the early stages of using the authority to solicit and invest; consequently the amounts involved have been modest so far. At present none of the funds invested have been designated for support of fellowship programs at American overseas research centers and international research institutions. Activities supported by these funds include, among others, the creation of 10 Regional Humanities Centers in the United States and [EDSITEment](#), an Internet resource that identifies the best available humanities websites for teachers, students, parents, and educators and includes online lesson plans.

Why and how did NEH gain this authority?

The Senate Appropriations Committee in 1998 included language in the Congressional legislation to provide the Chairman of the NEH with the authority to solicit and invest funds. The report of the Committee stated:

The Committee believes that it is appropriate to provide the agency with this ability, particularly in light of recent program reductions and discussions within Congress of alternate funding mechanisms designed to create an independent endowment. However, in providing this authority the Committee wants to make clear its recognition that private resources can only *enhance* [emphasis added], not replace, federal funding. The Committee remains strongly supportive of the Endowment's work and the provision of a federal appropriation to continue its mission.

NEH also makes use of matching funds. How does this work?

The Endowment encourages individuals and organizations to help support NEH-sponsored projects. An offer of NEH matching funds requires a grantee to secure gift funds from third parties before federal funds are awarded. The Endowment provides matching grants on a one-to-one basis in all programs except those designated as Challenge Grants. By offering potential donors the opportunity to double the impact of their gifts, matching grants are intended to stimulate private support for projects in the humanities. (A gift is defined as a voluntary transfer of money – or a noncash contribution that is subsequently converted to cash – from a nonfederal third party to the applicant without compensation or consideration in return. Only gifts that will be used to support budgeted project activities during the grant period are eligible to be matched with federal funds.) Because matching awards enable the Endowment to provide support to a greater number of significant but often costly projects, applicants are encouraged to request complete or partial support in the form of matching grants. A grant may include, for example, a combination of outright funds and an offer of matching funds. In FY 1999, for example, the NEH released \$113,533 in federal matching funds to one American overseas research center and two U.S. international research institutions to support fellowships for humanities scholars. Since the inception of the agency, NEH matching grants have generated over \$1.59 billion in giving for the humanities, including \$1.24 billion contributed for institutional support in response to NEH Challenge Grants. [See *FY 2000 Inventory of Programs* for

additional details.]

How does the Challenge Grants program work?

The NEH Office of Challenge Grants helps institutions and organizations engaged in humanities activities to secure long-term support for, and improvements in, their programs and resources. Awards made to museums, public libraries, colleges, historical societies, public television and radio stations, universities, scholarly associations, and other nonprofit entities improve their financial stability and the quality of their humanities activities. These awards enable many institutions to rely on more secure funding from endowment and thus become less dependent on term funding. In special circumstances Challenge Grants can also help with limited direct costs, such as acquisitions, the purchase of capital equipment, construction and renovation, and even debt retirement. Because of the matching requirements, these NEH awards also strengthen the humanities by encouraging nonfederal sources of support. Challenge Grants are made only when NEH funds will engender significant improvement or prevent substantial losses in humanities programs, help institutions carry out carefully conceived long-term plans for strengthening their basic resources and activities in the humanities, and enhance financial stability through increased nonfederal support for the humanities.

The federal portions of Challenge Grants have ranged in recent years from \$20,000 to \$1 million, the maximum possible amount awarded. The recipient of a first Challenge Grant must raise, from nonfederal donors, three times the amount of federal funds offered. Recipients of subsequent Challenge Grant awards are required to raise four times the amount offered.

Both federal and nonfederal funds are to be used to provide long-term benefits to the humanities. Challenge Grant funds do not merely replace funds already being expended on the humanities; instead they augment, improve, and strengthen the institution's activities in and commitment to the humanities.

Many American overseas research centers and international research organizations that presently have NEH grants for fellowships have also received Challenge Grants. The Albright Institute for Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, for example, received a Challenge Grant in 1998 to purchase

computer and security systems for the library and to establish endowments for the position of institute director, library staffing, and maintenance of the library computing system. Another recent example is the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, which received a Challenge Grant in 1997 to support endowment and building renovation for its Gennadius Library, as well as conservation, preservation, and access needs and information technologies.

Has the National Endowment for the Humanities entered into partnerships with other public or private agencies in support of international exchange and training programs?

Although the NEH is involved in various partnerships, at present none of these affects the support of NEH fellowships awarded through U.S. international research institutions and centers. In the past, however, there have been partnership agreements for support of international exchange opportunities.

In 1997 the Endowment joined in a limited-term cooperative funding initiative with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to increase support for fellowship programs at U.S. independent centers for advanced study in the humanities. Under the terms of the partnership, the NEH increased its allocation of funds to support fellowship programs at domestic and overseas centers for fiscal years 1997 and 1998. FY 1997 and 1998 awards for fellowship programs included six grants to U.S. overseas research centers and amendments to grants made in previous years to fourteen other centers and international research organizations; the increased funding allowed these institutions to offer the equivalent of thirty-eight year-long fellowships over the three years following the year in which the grants were awarded. The Mellon Foundation awarded about \$4.8 million in new funds to nine centers, including some American overseas research centers. The NEH and the Mellon Foundation became partners only in the joint decision to direct increased funds to postdoctoral fellowship programs at independent centers for advanced research. The partnership placed no restrictions on either the Endowment or the Mellon Foundation in the use or administration of the funds each organization awarded to centers. Funds from the Mellon Foundation were not given directly to the Endowment for its use. The Endowment conducted its own review process according to its published guidelines; the partnership required no changes in the Endowment's guidelines or review process. The Mellon Foundation solicited applications and similarly conducted its own review

process according to its priorities and guidelines.

Between 1985 and 1996, the Endowment cooperated with the then-United States Information Agency (USIA) to provide opportunities for teachers from other countries to join U.S. teachers as participants in NEH seminars focusing on American history and culture. USIA managed the selection process for foreign participants and supported travel and per diem costs for those teachers. NEH supported administrative costs of the seminars and the U.S. participants' stipends. Approximately 450 foreign teachers participated. Participants and directors alike found their experience enriched by the greater diversity of perspectives, and teachers from abroad had the opportunity to pursue research at American institutions and take part in discussions with American colleagues. This cooperative program ended as a result of budget cuts in FY 1996, which affected both NEH and USIA.

Another kind of partnership currently exists between the National Endowment for the Humanities, the German Historical Institute (GHI), and the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS). This partnership builds on existing programs through the sharing of information. It focuses on scholarly research on continuity, change, and globalization in postwar Germany and America. As appropriate, applicants successful in the competition for NEH Fellowships may be invited by the GHI and the AICGS to participate in this program. The program is intended to enrich scholarly work supported by the NEH, the GHI, and the AICGS by heightening communication and collaboration between American and German scholars and, through workshops and symposia, by making the results of the partnership available to audiences more quickly. No funds are exchanged between NEH and GHI and AICGS. The GHI and AICGS use the results of the NEH competition to identify potential participants in their programs.