



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

DIVISION OF **PRESERVATION AND ACCESS**

PRESERVATION ASSISTANCE GRANTS FOR SMALLER INSTITUTIONS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What expenses will a Preservation Assistance Grant cover?

The grant will cover fees for consultants (including honoraria, travel, lodging, and per diem expenses), costs for preservation supplies and furniture, environmental monitoring equipment, and workshop fees.

Is an institution required to contribute funds from its own budget to a Preservation Assistance Grant project?

No. Cost sharing is not required for Preservation Assistance Grants.

Are NEH staff members available to answer questions about an application?

Yes. Applicants may contact the staff to discuss applications prior to submission; however, the staff is not able to read draft proposals. The staff can be reached at 202-606-8570 or preservation@neh.gov.

Are there lists available of previously-funded Preservation Assistance Grants?

Yes. You can find a list of recent awards [here](#).

How do I determine the length of the grant period?

All Preservation Assistance Grants are awarded for a period of eighteen months, although a grantee may complete a project in a shorter period of time. In your narrative, you should show a schedule for your project activities. You should develop and present a schedule that can accommodate unexpected delays that might be encountered during the project. If your project

involves a consultant, discuss the length of time that the consultant will need to complete the proposed work.

How do I find the appropriate consultant?

It is important to match the skills and experience of the consultant to the nature of the collections and the project's activities. The links below may provide information that assists in your search for an appropriate consultant.

- The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), the national membership organization of conservation professionals, offers a free guide to conservation services on its website. Visit AIC's website at www.conservation-us.org/.
- The Regional Alliance for Preservation (RAP) is composed of regional conservation and preservation centers that offer preservation information, workshops, and assessments to libraries, archives, museums, and historical organizations. The staff at these organizations can offer advice or referrals. Visit RAP's website at www.rap-arcc.org.
- The Academy of Certified Archivists promotes fundamental standards of professional archival practice and maintains an archival consultant referral service. Visit the academy's website at www.certifiedarchivists.org.

How much should my institution pay the consultant(s)?

NEH does not recommend appropriate fees to be paid to consultants. It is advisable to discuss the proposed project in detail with the consultant and negotiate a mutually acceptable rate.

How much information about my institution's humanities collections should I provide in the application?

This section is one of the most important parts of your application and should be at least one full page in length. Specific information about your collections is vital in the evaluation of your application. Please take the time to describe the humanities content of your collections, identify the categories of materials in the collections, and indicate, where pertinent, the date ranges and quantities for the majority of the items.

A good description of an archival collection, for example, might begin by stating that the collection comprises two hundred letters by a school teacher written between 1870 and 1885; twenty-four linear feet of records pertaining to a local business active from 1940 through 1970; fifty-two maps documenting the history and development of the locality; twelve volumes of birth and death records for local residents from 1860 to 1950; and nine hundred photographs from a photographic studio active during the 1930s and 1940s.

A good description of a museum collection might begin by stating that there are ten thousand objects from the early 1800s to the present, including approximately one thousand costumes and items of personal adornment, five hundred Native American baskets, four hundred agricultural implements, and hundreds of household products and furnishings.

In all cases, the description should explain why the collections have humanities significance, and what sort of humanists (for example, scholars, teachers, creators of humanities public programming) could make use of them.

If the project focuses only on a portion of the collections, briefly describe the overall collections and then provide details about the portion to be surveyed or preserved.

What should I include in my description of the way in which my institution uses its collections for humanities research, education, or public programming?

By discussing the use of collections, applicants will help evaluators understand their importance to the humanities. Please be specific. For example, if the collections have been featured in an exhibition about the history of your community, list the exhibition's main topics and the time period covered. If the collections have been used by teachers in the classroom, indicate the lessons that featured the collections. If the collections are available for research, describe the range of subjects that have been or could be explored.

A previous preservation survey has indicated that my institution needs to improve the environment for its humanities collections. Is funding available for the purchase and installation of climate control equipment?

Preservation Assistance Grants may not be used to support the installation or improvement of building systems, such as climate control, security or fire protection systems.

I have received funding elsewhere for a preservation assessment. On the basis of that assessment, I want to apply for a Preservation Assistance Grant to purchase storage furniture. Is this permissible?

Yes. Requests to purchase storage furniture must be based on a previous consultation with a preservation professional or on recommendations from a preservation assessment. Many applicants have had consultations or conducted assessments with support from sources—both private and governmental—other than NEH. When a proposed project is based on a prior consultation or assessment, the executive summary of the assessment report should accompany the application as supporting documentation. If you have obtained advice from a preservation professional, we recommend that you include as part of the application a letter of support from that consultant.

If I am planning to request funds for archival preservation supplies, why must I include a plan to arrange and describe archival collections?

The preservation and access needs of archive and manuscript collections differ from those of object collections in significant ways. Specifically, preservation of and access to archival collections are intricately related and must be dealt with in tandem. The processing and rehousing of archival collections should include plans to organize or arrange the materials and the development of a finding aid or inventory to the collection.

May I request funds to digitize collections?

No, but you may request funds for training in the best practices for sustaining digital collections, standards for digital preservation, and the care and handling of collections during digitization.

Our institution needs to begin planning for long-term preservation of its digital assets. How may a Preservation Assistance Grant assist in that effort?

You may request funds for a preservation assessment of digital collections, or you may request funds for training in the best practices for sustaining digital collections, standards for digital preservation, and the care and handling of collections during digitization. However, institutional efforts to build infrastructure or develop systems to access or manage digital assets are outside the scope of this grant program.