

Open Government Plan

National Endowment for the Humanities

Version 3.0, September 2014

I. Introduction

This document is the second major update to our original Open Government Plan of April 2010. It includes status information about various NEH initiatives to increase access to the public.

This document sets forth the National Endowment for the Humanities' (NEH) plan for promoting transparency, participation, and collaboration in all aspects of its work. This open government plan has been developed in accordance with the [Open Government Directive](#) issued by the White House on December 8, 2009. It also incorporates new requirements set forth in the [2014 Agency Open Government Plans](#) memo issued February 24, 2014.

II. Access to Information

This section describes the ways in which NEH currently provides the public with access to information on various aspects of the agency's work.

A. Publishing Information Online

Visitors to NEH's website can access a wide variety of information about the agency and the projects it supports, including:

- application guidelines for each of NEH's discretionary grant programs
- a regularly updated grant deadline calendar
- examples of funded projects
- funding ratios for each grant program
- lists of recent grant awards
- profiles of NEH's grant-making offices and divisions
- information for grantees concerning the administration of their grants
- recent annual reports submitted by the agency
- agency press releases
- the full text of *Humanities*, NEH's bimonthly magazine
- links to NEH-supported partnerships, such as EDSITEment and Chronicling America
- recent speeches by the Endowment's Chairman
- news and information on the National Humanities Medals and the Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities
- a link to an online database of NEH-funded projects awarded since 1980

- a complete staff listing, with phone numbers and e-mail addresses

B. Publication in an Open Format

NEH conforms to industry and agency best practices in regard to open format standards. Content available through NEH's website is searchable, indexable, downloadable, and available in formats that are accessible through any modern web browser or freely available software/plugins, such as Adobe Acrobat. NEH data exported to data.gov is available in XML format.

C. Publication of High-Value Data Sets

Since the first Open Government Directive in 2010, NEH has been systematically identifying and publishing our high-value data sets. As a small research agency, all our data collection efforts are information about the grants we award. In 2010, we successfully published all our digital grant data from 1979 – the present. The data was published both on Data.gov in XML format as well as on our own website in an easy-to-search format along with a simple API to enable the field to easily re-use that data. We also published data sets with lists of all our scholarly peer reviewers.

For 2012, we embarked on, and successfully completed, three new databases. Our Products Online Database allows the public to see the books, articles, films and other products that result from NEH grants. Our Prizes Online Database allows the public to learn about prizes (e.g. Pulitzers, Emmys, etc.) won by our grantees. Our Media Coverage Online database allows the public to find media coverage about our funded grants. All three of these flagship initiatives are fully completed and in use by the public. Our fourth flagship initiative from 2012, putting in place the Research Performance Progress Report, is still in development and on schedule to begin public testing next year.

For our 2014 flagship initiatives, we will be focusing on digitizing our pre-1979 data and making that available to the public as well (see the Flagship Initiatives section for more details). As a small agency that does very little data collection, once we complete these 2014 flagships, we will have made available essentially all the data we collect. We will, however, continue to encourage users to take advantage of this data. Currently, we make a point of advertising the availability of this data when we speak to universities, libraries, and other constituent groups.

D. Open Government and Open Data Webpage

NEH's open government/open data web page can be found at www.neh.gov/open or at www.neh.gov/data. This web page highlights NEH's emphasis on transparency and details compliance with the Open Government Directive. The web page features this open government plan and also includes links to the data sets described in section C above.

NEH's open government web page is interactive and user-friendly. The web page also includes a feedback mechanism that allows users to submit comments, suggestions, or questions on

NEH's open government initiatives. Messages regarding NEH's open government plan or open government web page are directed to the designated open government representative in NEH's Office of the Chairman.

E. Quality of Government Information

NEH will ensure that information on its public website, including its open government web page, conforms to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance on information quality and that adequate systems and processes are in place within NEH to promote such conformity.

The Open Government Directive requests that NEH designate a high-level senior official to be accountable for the quality and objectivity of, and internal controls over, publicly-disseminated spending information. This official is NEH's Deputy Chairman.

F. Proactive Disclosures

The NEH has a documented procedure for proactively posting sample funded grant proposals on our website. Staff are encouraged to identify proposals of interest to the field. These are sent to the Office of General Counsel, who ensure any PII has been redacted. Finally, these samples are posted on the NEH's website for the public to view.

G. Whistleblower Protection

NEH is committed to upholding the whistleblower protection laws and ensuring that all NEH employees fully are informed of their rights and remedies under the prohibited personnel practices and whistleblower retaliation protection provisions of Title 5. To this end, NEH has posted on its staff-only intranet site, information about prohibited personnel practices and the whistleblower protection laws, including links to the OSC website, which provide information to current employees. NEH has also posted information about the whistleblower protection laws on its public-facing website, along with a link to the OSC website. NEH is in the process of fulfilling the other requirements to obtain OSC certification, and anticipates completing the certification process in before the end of 2014, if possible.

III. NEH's Open Government Plan

This section describes NEH's plans to maintain its commitment to transparency, expand its efforts to promote participation of the public, and build on its already-extensive practice of collaboration.

NEH recently completed a major overhaul of the agency's website. The site features new information architecture and improved usability. Dynamic drop-down menus for primary and secondary navigation, web 2.0, and other enhancements enable members of the public to find what they need quickly. This new website fosters participation, adds transparency, and facilitates collaboration.

A. Transparency

NEH is committed to openness in its work and seeks to provide as much information as possible to the public. NEH firmly believes that the taxpayers deserve to know how their funding is being used and should be provided the opportunity to offer feedback on how NEH can be even more effective.

1. Review of NEH's current transparency efforts

As noted in section II.A of this plan, NEH already provides a wide variety of information, guidelines, publications, and reports on its website. Additional information about the work of NEH is made available in the following ways (items with an *asterisk were completed and put in place as a result of our previous Open Government Plan):

- *Facebook: NEH uses a Facebook page to post information on NEH activities and to solicit public comment from users.
- *Twitter: NEH uses several Twitter accounts to inform the public of our grants and programs and to solicit questions and feedback from the public.
- *YouTube: NEH has a YouTube channel with a variety of video content, including public events, speeches, and film clips. In addition, it includes archived versions of NEH webcasts.
- *Webcasts: Among the types of programs that are being webcast is our annual Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities.
- *Blogs: Each of NEH's grant making offices and divisions has a blog which they use to highlight our work and inform the public.
- *Calendars: NEH has developed and post on our website a comprehensive calendar of forthcoming events and activities related to the work of the agency. Included on the calendar will be upcoming speaking engagement of the NEH staff, openings of major museum exhibitions, airings of NEH-supported film and radio programs, conferences and workshops on humanities topics, and many other NEH-supported events.
- Information on upcoming grant review panels is posted in the *Federal Register*.
- NEH staff regularly conducts "mock" peer review panels at colleges and universities, enabling the public to observe first hand NEH's evaluation procedures and to make suggestions for improvements.
- As a matter of policy NEH shares the results of the peer review process with all of its applicants, and the agency also makes public the names of those who serve on review panels.
- NEH provides information on the success ratios for each of its grant programs, enabling prospective applicants to know in advance how competitive a particular grant program is likely to be.
- The NEH Chairman makes numerous speeches and public appearances at venues across the country. His public appearances are advertised widely by the host institutions and by NEH.
- Public events, such as scholarly conferences hosted by NEH, are often open to the public.
- Open sessions are held at NEH's meetings of its National Council on the Humanities.
- NEH regularly meets with the donor community, nonprofit organizations, and corporations to develop innovative methods of collaboration.

- Press releases are issued regularly throughout the year to announce major agency milestones, publications, and events.
- A fully searchable online database of NEH-funded projects has been created.
- NEH regularly responds to press inquiries and requests for interviews, and proactively reaches out to media outlets to publicize information about NEH activities.
- NEH produces and disseminates an award-winning bimonthly magazine, *Humanities*. Available in print and online, this journal provides the public with a variety of informative articles about a wide range of humanities topics.
- Regularly updated information about NEH job vacancies—including time-sensitive information about the status of already-submitted applications—is made available on the government-wide USAJOBS website.
- NEH is actively working to upgrade its website from the DRUPAL 6 to the DRUPAL 7 platform to make its approximately 22,000 pages more usable and easy to navigate than in the past. The upgrade, when complete, will also make it possible to more conveniently access website information across all devices, including tablets and smart phones.
- NEH has added new sections and sets of information to its website relating to its Created Equal initiative. All names, dates, places, and programs are detailed on a special “Created Equal” part of the site to alert the public to film screenings of four popular civil rights films and associated programming in neighborhoods across the country.

Participation in Transparency Initiatives

NEH currently exports grant-related datasets to data.gov in an open, XML format. The agency also exports all our grant data to USAspending.gov. The agency is also a full participant with Grants.gov, both posting grant announcements and receiving grant proposals via the system. We also participate in CFDA.gov, providing them with annual updates to our grant categories. We also participate in SAM.gov, which is an important part of the grant award process.

2. Compliance with legal and administrative guidance related to transparency

Freedom of Information Act

NEH’s Office of the General Counsel (OGC) serves as the agency’s FOIA Requestor Service Center and is responsible for processing all Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and administrative appeals. The FOIA personnel in the OGC consist of the General Counsel, an attorney-advisor, and a paralegal specialist. Upon receipt of a FOIA request, FOIA personnel in the OGC intake and process the request by working, if necessary, with NEH staff to search for responsive records, and by preparing an agency response for NEH’s Deputy Chairman, who serves as the Chief FOIA Officer and signs off on all FOIA responses.

NEH is committed to responding to all FOIA requests and administrative appeals in a timely manner. NEH has worked to significantly improve its response times over the past few years; in FY 2013, NEH processed 91% of its FOIA requests within 20 business days or less, well under the response time required by FOIA. NEH is also committed to ensuring that the agency has an effective system for responding to FOIA requests. NEH has dedicated two members of the OGC staff to work on FOIA requests and administrative appeals as a priority. NEH has taken other

steps to streamline and strengthen its FOIA response process; these are further detailed in the latest NEH Chief FOIA Officer Report, which is available on the NEH website at <http://www.neh.gov/about/foia/chief-foia-officer-reports>. As reported in NEH's FY 2013 Annual Report, the agency only had one backlogged request in FY 2013, which has since been completed and closed.

Information Quality

In conformance with the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001, Section 515(b), NEH has developed a formal procedure to comply with the OMB's guidelines on "Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality, Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated by Federal Agencies." Information about NEH's efforts in this area can be found at <http://www.neh.gov/whowere/dissemination.html>.

Transparency Guidance

As noted elsewhere in this plan, NEH has posted six high-quality data sets on the government-wide data.gov website. In addition, NEH is fully compliant with the requirements to post agency data on the USAspending.gov website and on the FFATA (Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act) Portal.

Records Management

NEH has recently formed a new Records Management Committee. This group is now meeting with agency staff to perform a major overhaul of our records management policies, specifically aimed at moving the agency towards a fully electronic records system, as per NARA guidance.

B. Participation

NEH values the input of the public and is dedicated to expanding opportunities for the public to participate in the agency's work.

1. Existing opportunities for public participation

NEH's open government web page incorporates a mechanism for the public to provide feedback on published information and to suggest ways in which the agency can enhance and augment the information that is now provided.

The NEH website includes a link to the agency's Office of the Inspector General, where members of the public can report instances of alleged waste, fraud, or abuse related to an activity supported or conducted by NEH. A toll-free telephone number is provided, along with pertinent addresses to which allegations can be sent.

Additional opportunities for public comment are provided at the conclusion of NEH's peer review panel meetings. Each year more than 100 such panels are convened by NEH at its headquarters in Washington. Scholars, teachers, and other humanities practitioners from around the country are invited to come to Washington to provide funding recommendations on grant applications submitted to NEH's various grant programs. At the conclusion of each panel meeting, panelists are given the opportunity to comment on the goals, policies, and procedures of the NEH grant program for which they are serving as a panelist.

Similarly, project directors meetings—which are a routine annual occurrence for a number of NEH grant programs—afford NEH an opportunity to elicit from the directors their opinions on grant priorities, policies, and procedures.

Site visits performed by NEH staff provide an additional mechanism to invite public participation in the work of the agency. Such visits are an integral component of grant oversight at NEH. While on site visits NEH staff welcome the comments and suggestions of project participants. Such comments can often lead to improvements in various aspects of the grant program.

A key feature of NEH's new "eGMS" (electronic Grants Management System) is the "Improve eGMS: Make a Suggestion!" page. Here users of the agency's proprietary grants system are invited to suggest ways in which the system can be changed to bring greater simplicity and clarity to its core functions.

Speeches presented by the NEH chairman and other senior staff provide yet another opportunity to invite public comment on the work of the agency. Following such presentations there is almost always a question-and-answer session during which members of the audience can ask questions and make suggestions.

2. New Feedback Mechanisms

In the coming years NEH will continue to explore new feedback mechanisms that will further enhance public participation and involvement in NEH activities.

C. Collaboration

NEH actively pursues collaboration with government agencies, both foreign and domestic, and with educational and nonprofit organizations, private foundations, corporations, and other entities seeking to advance knowledge and understanding in the humanities. By leveraging each other's strengths and identifying areas in which collaboration can enhance impact, NEH and its partners are finding new ways to achieve common goals.

To best ensure the NEH continues to increase our collaborations, the NEH Chairman has appointed an Assistant Chairman for Partnerships and Strategic Initiatives who focuses on this

area. Under her leadership, numerous additional collaborations have been put in place. Here is the current list:

NEH Partnerships

Partnerships with U.S. Government Agencies

Institute of Library and Museum Services

Digging Into Data: International partnership to fund large-scale data analysis in the humanities and social sciences.

Digital Public Library of America: NEH and IMLS, along with several private foundations (including Sloan Foundation, Knight Foundation, and Mellon Foundation) have provided important early funding for a national digital portal to bring together the riches of America's libraries, archives, and museums, and make them freely available online.

Japan-US Friendship Commission

Fellowships for Advanced Social Science Research on Japan Program: JUSFC transfers funds to NEH to review applicants and fund fellows.

Library of Congress

John W. Kluge Fellows Program: LOC transfers funds to NEH to review applicants to the John W. Kluge Fellows Program, based at LOC.

National Book Festival: NEH transfers funds annually to the Center of the Book at LOC to fund the National Book Festival.

National Digital Newspaper Program: Partnership between the NEH and LOC to provide digital access to United States newspapers published between 1836 and 1922, which are published on the "Chronicling America" website.

National Digital Stewardship Alliance: Membership in a collaborative effort to establish, maintain, and advance the capacity to preserve our nation's digital resources for the benefit of present and future generations

National Endowment for the Arts

Design for Accessibility: NEH transfers funds to NEA to revise "Design for Accessibility: A Cultural Administrator's Handbook."

Federal Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development: NEH is a member of interagency group with regular convenings on wide range of federal activities involving arts, such as health, aging, child development, Native American communities, support for veterans, etc.

National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards: NEH transfers funds to NEA to administer the awards. Costs are shared between the NEH, NEA, IMLS and PCAH.

Research, Practice, and Innovation at the Intersection of Arts, Science, and Humanities: Partnership between NEA, NSF, and NEH to collaboratively leverage R&D investments across the fields of art, science, humanities, education, and engineering, with a particular focus on digital technology.

US Government Membership in the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies: NEH and NEA have shared annual membership costs in past years.

National Institutes of Health—National Library of Medicine

Cooperation in the Encouragement of Scholarship: Ongoing development of collaborative activities between the humanities and biomedical communities to share expertise and develop new research agendas.

National Park Service

Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War Traveling Exhibition: Supports nationwide educational humanities programming in observance of the sesquicentennial anniversary of the American Civil War. The NEH transfers funds to the National Constitution Center to develop the traveling exhibition.

National Science Foundation

Digging Into Data: International partnership to fund large-scale data analysis in the humanities and social sciences.

Documenting Endangered Languages: Partnership between the NEH and NSF to develop and advance knowledge concerning endangered human languages.

Research, Practice, and Innovation at the Intersection of Arts, Science, and Humanities: Partnership between NEA, NSF, and NEH to collaboratively leverage R&D investments across the fields of art, science, humanities, education, and engineering, with a particular focus on digital technology.

Survey of Earned Doctorates: NEH transfers funds to NSF sponsor data collection for the Survey of Earned Doctorates, a census of all research doctorates granted by U.S. institutions.

President's Committee on Arts and the Humanities

Film Forward: NEH transfers funds for PCAH to administer international culture exchange program for filmmakers.

National Student Poets Program: NEH transfers funds for PCAH to administer award program for high school poets.

Smithsonian

Changing America: National Museum of African American History and Culture will oversee design, production and distribution of a traveling version of a Smithsonian exhibit, "Changing America," to complement the NEH's "Created Equal" program.

U.S. Department of State

Interagency Agreement on NEH-funded films: Provides a framework for cooperation in which NEH agrees to incorporate into the relevant guidelines and award letters an expectation that grantee filmmakers will cooperate with the State Department in offering IIP access, for diplomatic use, to documentary films that receive NEH production grants.

Interagency Collaboration on Learning: Agreement to collaborate in making historic collections of State Department Diplomatic Reception Rooms widely available on a digital platform with special emphasis on educational outreach.

White House Initiatives for Minority Serving Institutions

Through executive orders, federal agencies are asked to conduct programs and/or report impact on five categories of educational institutions: Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Executive Order 13532), American Indian and Alaska Native Education (Executive Order 13592), Educational Excellence for Hispanics (Executive Order 13555), Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Executive Order 13515), and Educational Excellence for African Americans (Executive Order 13621).

Partnerships with Non-Governmental U.S. Entities

American Library Association: Cooperative agreement to administer NEH Muslim Journeys Bookshelf.

Carnegie Corporation: Partnership to fund NEH Muslim Journeys Bookshelf.

Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art: Partnership to fund arts and media components of NEH Muslim Journeys Bookshelf.

Civics Renewal Network: NEH/EDSITEment partnership with national organizations (public-private group including American Bar Association, Annenberg Public Policy Center, Library of Congress, National Archives, National Constitution Center, Newseum) to support civics web portal for students and related Constitution Day activities highlighting importance of civics education.

Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History: Cooperative agreement to administer NEH's "Created Equal" film set project and create content for a project website.

Mid-America Arts Alliance: Cooperative agreement to maintain current pool of "NEH on the Road" exhibitions, disperse exhibitions that will be retired and reconfigure additional NEH-funded exhibitions.

National History Day: Partnership to award top prizes and conduct special contest to encourage student projects using NEH/Library of Congress "Chronicling America"

PBS: Framework for distribution of a select group of NEH-funded films through PBS International, the worldwide co-production and distribution division of PBS Distribution.

Verizon Foundation: Support for EDSITEment, an NEH-administered website providing lesson plans in subject areas of literature and language arts, foreign languages, art and culture, and history and social studies (grant concludes in 2014).

Partnerships with International Agencies

Arts & Humanities Research Council (United Kingdom)

Digging Into Data: International partnership to fund large-scale data analysis in the humanities and social sciences.

Collaborative Research: ongoing discussions of opportunities for co-funding US-UK research partnerships, with a trial program *Using Humanities Scholarship to Study Health and Well-Being in the United Kingdom and the United States* that did not yield fundable projects and current discussion of opportunities that may connect "Bridging Cultures" with AHRC's "Translating Cultures" theme.

Canada Fund for Innovation

Digging Into Data: International partnership to fund large-scale data analysis in the humanities and social sciences.

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation, Germany)

NEH/DFG Bi-Lateral Digital Humanities Program

Economic & Social Research Council (United Kingdom)

Digging Into Data: International partnership to fund large-scale data analysis in the humanities and social sciences.

Jisc, formerly the Joint Information Systems Committee (United Kingdom)

Digging Into Data: International partnership to fund large-scale data analysis in the humanities and social sciences

Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China

MOU on the Cooperation in the Encouragement of Scholarly Research in the Humanities and the Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (Canada)

Digging Into Data: International partnership to fund large-scale data analysis in the humanities and social sciences.

Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research

Digging Into Data: International partnership to fund large-scale data analysis in the humanities and social sciences.

Netherlands eScience Center (NLeSC)

Digging Into Data: International partnership to fund large-scale data analysis in the humanities and social sciences.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Canada)

Digging Into Data: International partnership to fund large-scale data analysis in the humanities and social sciences.

Trans-Atlantic Platform for the Social Sciences and the Humanities (European Union)

NEH and NSF are observers (or “associates”) participating in EU-funded effort to foster trans-Atlantic research collaborations in the humanities and the social sciences. Signatories to the MOU are as follows: Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (Brazil), The Academy of Finland, The International Social Science Council, l’Agence Nationale de la Recherche (France), Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e.V. (Germany), Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (Mexico), Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (Portugal), Arts and

Humanities Research Council (UK), Economic and Social Science Research Council (UK); Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Germany) is an Associate Partner.

D. Status of NEH's Four Flagship Initiatives from 2012

1) Flagship Initiative: Products Online Database

Description: A major crowd-sourced online database that allows the public to see the books, articles, films, and other products that result from NEH grants. [STATUS: Completed]

2) Prizes Online Database

Description: A major crowd-sourced online database that allows the public to see prizes (e.g. Pulitzer, Emmy, etc.) that have been awarded to NEH-funded projects. [STATUS: Completed]

3) Media Coverage

Description: A major crowd-sourced online database that allows the public to see media coverage (e.g. newspaper articles, TV interviews, etc.) that cover NEH-funded projects. [STATUS: Completed]

4) Research Performance Progress Report Implementation

Description: Implement a new system for grantees to report much more detail about the impact of their projects. We will make this data available to the public both in raw and aggregate forms and also include it in our media outreach. [STATUS: Currently piloting]

E. New Flagship Initiative for 2014

McBee Data Digitization Project: Digitizing the Early Records of NEH's Grants

Background: Currently, our website allows the public to search for any grant we've made from 1980 – the present. All of our pre-1980 grants were records on computer punch cards called "McBee Cards." Our new flagship initiative is to digitize these cards, covering our agency from its inception in 1967 to 1980. When completed, the public will be able to search the entire historical record of grants our agency has made. Our goal is to finish this project during 2015 to mark the 50th anniversary of our agency.