

## TRANSCRIPT

### NEH Webinar on Climate Smart Humanities Organizations Grants, October 28, 2022

**Tatiana Ausema** 00:01

Welcome, everybody, to the prospective applicant webinar for NEH's new program for Climate Smart Humanities Organizations. So, thank you for joining us today; I hope this is a useful half hour/forty-five minutes that we spend together. I am Tatiana Ausema, the Senior Program Officer in the Office of Challenge Programs. And I'm just really glad to be able to talk to you about how your organization can start thinking about climate informed strategic planning and how this grant program and NEH might be able to help you get started. So, over the course of the presentation, hopefully I'll be able to answer some questions that you might have brought with you about this new opportunity and the application process.

00:50

A couple pieces of housekeeping before we get started. There is a meeting chat feature. So, if you have questions as the webinar goes along, please do go ahead and enter them in the chat. I have colleagues here with me that are monitoring the chat and they may answer some of the questions directly, but we may hold on to others to ask at the end of the webinar. So please do go ahead and use that chat feature liberally to ask questions and talk to each other. The webinar is being recorded and the recording and the transcript will be available on our website within a week or so. If you'd like to use the automated closed captioning during this session, that is available too from the bar at the bottom of your screen. And if you have any questions getting to the captioning and transcription, please feel free to ask in the chat and we can help you with that. So, before we kick things off, I'd like to introduce Stefanie Walker, the Director of the Office of Challenge Programs, to offer a brief welcome and a few thoughts about this new program. Stefanie?

**Stefanie Walker** 02:04

Thank you, Tatiana, and let me also say hello and welcome to this webinar on Climate Smart Humanities Organizations at the National Endowment for the Humanities, or NEH. My name is Stefanie Walker. I am the Director of the Office of Challenge Programs at NEH. About Challenge Programs: since 1977 our office has offered different kinds of Challenge grants that strengthen the institutional base of the humanities, investing in projects and activities that have a long-term impact. So, we are very excited to introduce you to Climate Smart, our newest program, and I'm delighted to have your attendance here today. Climate Smart is part of a larger initiative by the Chair of NEH, Shelly Lowe, which she will roll out in the near future, so stay tuned for that. I just want to say thank you for coming. I look forward to hearing your questions and comments. With that, Tatiana back to you.

**Tatiana Ausema** 03:20

Great, thank you so much, Stefanie. So, over the next thirty to forty minutes, I would like to introduce you to the concept of climate informed strategic planning and how NEH's new Climate Smart program might support these efforts at your humanities institution. I'll begin

today with why NEH is launching this new program, the importance of developing climate action and adaptation plans, some details about the program structure, and then we'll close with considerations that you may want to think about as you start developing your project. I'll provide an overview of how to apply for Challenge grants, the review process, review criteria, and then I'll leave you at the end with some tips and resources that apply to this program, but also across NEH.

04:15

All of the information that I'm going to discuss today can be found on the program information page located on the NEH website. You can get there from the NEH home page by clicking on "Grants," which will take you to an option to search by program or division, and Challenge Programs is the first listing on the page (so it should be easy to find). This is where the webinar recording will be posted, as well as program resources as they're developed. The most important item on this web page is the link to the Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO. If, after the webinar, you decide that this program might be a good fit for your organization, please do read the NOFO carefully for instructions and application requirements. It's a lengthy document but contains really crucial information for your project and application to be successful. The other really important piece of our program page is this grant snapshot that contains key dates that you'll want to keep in mind while preparing your application and contact information for our division. And I will say at the beginning—and repeat it again—that if you have any questions, please do use this contact information to reach out to us. We'll be happy to answer questions about this or any of our programs.

05:33

As Stefanie kind of suggested, many of you might associate the Office of Challenge Programs with brick and mortar construction projects, or if you've worked with NEH for a while, perhaps with endowments at colleges and universities, but our mandate as a division is much broader: it's to offer federal matching funds for projects that support the institutional base of the humanities by expanding organizational capacity and affecting long term durable change. Today, one of the greatest threats to all types of humanities organizations comes from the increased costs, instability, and physical risks posed by climate change. Failure to anticipate and plan for these risks threatens not only organizational health, but access to collections, scholarship, programming, and the shared community history that only work in the humanities can really bring.

06:30

This new Climate Smart Humanities program seeks to respond to these challenges by offering support for organizational assessments and strategic planning that sustain and protect historical, cultural, educational, intellectual, and physical assets from these climate-related risks. The grant outcome or deliverable is a comprehensive data-informed planning document that anticipates operational, physical, and financial impacts of current and future climate-related events on humanities institutions and the communities they serve, while also establishing actions that reduce the organizations' direct impact on the environment. This is a relatively new form of strategic planning, but it's essential for humanities organizations to begin this work now. For those of you who are attending the live webinar (because this will be recorded) just this morning the United Nations released a report stating that global carbon emissions need to be reduced by 45% in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. But

that kind of change takes time and planning to implement effectively. You may not be in a position to reduce your operational carbon footprint by 45% or even know what your baseline is in order to figure out what 45% would be. But even basic strategic planning efforts can reduce energy costs very quickly. They can improve safety, they can mitigate environmental impact, and they can increase resilience. The time and money invested in planning now will allow you and your humanities organization to continue to serve your community throughout this ongoing period of change, but also be a model for other organizations seeking to do the same type of planning.

08:20

You may be attending today's webinar because you know that planning for climate impacts is important, but your organization doesn't have the staff, funding, expertise, or even quite know where to begin. For example, perhaps your town or campus might have set a climate goal to be carbon neutral by 2030 or establish zero waste goals. What concrete steps can you take to meet those goals? What data do you need to establish a baseline and how do you measure the change? Is environmental impact the same as a carbon footprint? Alternatively, you might have had some basic energy assessments done, but are unsure of what your next steps are or how to move from a building-focused assessment to something more comprehensive that encompasses all of operations. And then, of course, for all nonprofits there's the question of staffing and costs. What are the risks and opportunities associated with being carbon neutral or zero waste? And how do we budget and pay for all of these changes?

09:23

Alternatively, perhaps your concern is more aligned with how climate impacts might affect your mission or building through severe weather events or rising sea levels. How will increased daytime temperatures really impact your work, staff, programming, and mission? How does that risk compare to the risk of inland flooding, perhaps, or wildfire? What are the costs associated with relocating some or all of your operations, and how will that impact your community and your audiences? What other hazards might we be facing collectively that we're not prepared for? How can you work best with other humanities organizations to help prepare for and respond to climate change?

10:07

All of these questions and more can be answered through comprehensive assessments and development of an associated strategic action plan. With NEH support and third-party non-federal matching funds, you can pay for staff or consultants to gather this data on current operations, contract with expert consultants, engage in organizational and community listening sessions, provide training, weigh options, and ultimately develop a clear vision and priorities for organizational health. You and your team can engage deeply with these questions and set intentions for future action. In other words, your humanities organization can become Climate Smart.

10:53

As you might have inferred already, climate smart strategic planning focuses on two distinct, but related, types of activities that increase resilience. Mitigation planning (that focuses on reducing your institution's environmental impact and energy costs) and adaptation planning (that prepares for and adjusts to actual and expected climate change scenarios to protect humanities

focused institutional assets and facilities). And here you can see a Venn diagram that shows mitigation activities as well as adaptation activities, but there's significant overlap in the middle and I'm going to talk about both mitigation and adaptation separately, but we absolutely encourage you to propose projects that include both, and especially activities that overlap. The key is to develop a project, and assessment plans, and ultimately a proposal, that are appropriate to your organization's needs, capacities, and ability.

12:00

Mitigation activities inform comprehensive climate action plans, or a similar strategic document, that details a framework for measuring and reducing your organization's carbon footprint and other climatic impacts to reduce energy costs and increase resilience. Climate action plans generally include an inventory of existing emissions and waste production, energy audits or benchmarking, emission reduction, clean energy targets, and prioritize reduction actions and resources necessary to achieve the stated goals. Comprehensive climate action plans should be based on multiple building and operational assessments. These assessments are listed here, and they may include comprehensive energy audits of both your buildings, but also land use, utilities, operations, and your facilities. You might calculate your organization's carbon footprint, which would include energy sources, but also transportation, and materials use, and the supplies that you use. It might involve testing your existing systems, such as your heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, natural gas, and water to improve efficiency and identify areas of waste. And in order to do that, you might find that you need to install monitoring equipment or sub metering equipment in order to get some of this important data.

13:27

NEH does not require or endorse any format for resources for performing these organizational assessments and data gathering. Unfortunately, and part of the reason that NEH has developed this program, there are very few examples of climate action plans prepared by US-based humanities organizations to use as models. That said, many of your states and municipalities have climate action plans online that might offer a sense of what is possible, and the type of assessments you might want to consider proposing in your application. Most climate action plans will begin with some form of an energy audit. The best place to begin with this is looking at your local energy provider and seeing what they offer to nonprofit organizations in terms of tools to track and manage energy use. Other free tools such as the Department of Energy's Energy Star portfolio might work well for your organization, or your facilities, operations, or engineer (if you happen to have one) might also have suggestions. The Department of Energy Energy Star Portfolio tracks energy use in different sectors and as you go in, you'll see that cultural organizations, especially museums, are vastly underrepresented in that particular product. So, by all means, anything we can do to get the cultural and museum sector into the Energy Star portfolio is great. If you're joining us from an educational institution, there is more data in there from other educational institutions and those are freely accessible and available to you.

15:04

Depending on your organizational complexity, you may propose working with outside contractors to perform a more extensive energy audit. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning engineers, or ASHRAE, details the best practices and assessments for three levels, and you may want to talk to an engineer about what those could

potentially look like. Regardless of the format, a comprehensive assessment will most likely look beyond just energy use and look at all of your operations to develop carbon or ecological footprints. This comprehensive assessment might also include waste production, water use, or transportation in order to establish a baseline for your organization, and to measure any sort of reductions. This can be done again in consultation with outside experts, contractors and consultants, or you could hire existing or temporary staff to coordinate these efforts in-house, such as hiring a Chief Sustainability Officer for this particular project.

16:12

Once the assessments and data collection is complete, you're ready to write your climate action plan. The final plan should build upon the assessment that set intentions for short, medium, or long-term organizational actions, such as evaluating alternative energy sources that might be more cost efficient and sustainable, identifying building improvements that would result in increased efficiencies and lower energy use, and landscape improvements (such as reforestation or native ground cover) to support better environmental conditions and offset your carbon-producing activities. You might see that transportation is a large portion of your carbon footprint, and so you might start looking at other options for visitors, staff, and operations such as bicycle and pedestrian access. And finally, you might start thinking about establishing organizational recycling, composting, reuse, and water reduction plans. And just to be very clear, this climate action plan will just set intentions for these—we don't expect or want you to be doing these activities during your planning grant period.

17:26

As I mentioned before, adaptation activities inform comprehensive climate vulnerability assessment, or similar risk-based adaptation plans, that identify the likelihood of future climate hazards and their potential impact on your humanities organizations, buildings, operations, finances, programming, staff, and audiences. And this goes hand-in-hand with mitigation planning for your comprehensive climate strategic plan. A risk-based adaptation plan will generally include an assessment of demographic and environmental context, the impact of past climatic events, modeling of climate trends and future scenarios, and a prioritized list of action steps and resources required to reduce these risks. A comprehensive climate adaptation plan should be informed by multiple types of risk-based assessments, such as examining location-specific risks associated with sea level rise if you're on the coast, inland flooding if you're in a mountain area, extreme weather, or wildfire. You might assess specific buildings and grounds to determine their capacity to withstand current and future climatic events. Looking at the impact of environmental conditions on your programs and operations, such as timing of your operating hours and seasonal programming, collecting data to record trends in temperature, and assessing any current emergency and continuity of operation plans that you might have.

19:00

Adaptation planning requires the use of different resources and consultants. But again, NEH does not require or promote the use of one particular platform, consultant, or resource over another. For adaptation-related assessments, your organization might want to consult risk maps that exist to determine which climate-related hazards exist in your area. The newly released climate mapping for resilience and adaptation can be a great starting point for assessing risk. This tool integrates information from across the federal government to help people consider their local exposure to climate-related hazards. You might also engage with engineers to

determine building or site capacity to withstand flooding, wind, heat, or to assess systems and their ability to manage increased rainfall, extreme temperatures, or particulates associated with wildfires.

19:58

Once these assessments are complete, you're ready to write a climate adaptation plan. The resulting climate adaptation plan might set intentions for short, medium, or long-term actions for your organization, such as developing conceptual plans to retrofit, relocate, or strengthen existing buildings; considering climate smart water management, such as reduction of impervious surfaces, water recycling, reuse efforts, and mitigating water damage to humanities-centered buildings, collections, and programming. You might consider establishing new or updating existing emergency and continuity of operations plans, developing mutual aid networks of related organizations in your geographic area, or looking at community partnerships that support your organization's adaptation and resilience efforts.

20:52

Together, mitigation and adaptation can inform comprehensive climate-informed strategic plans, and while you can focus exclusively on mitigation or adaptation, we encourage you to think broadly in your proposal to NEH and develop comprehensive strategic planning that presents options to both reduce your organization's impact on the environment and its vulnerability to climatic events. Once you finish watching this webinar, I would encourage each of you to do some internet sleuthing for climate action plans for cultural organizations, vulnerability assessments for universities, or whatever combination of keywords fits your institution. In all likelihood, there will be a few hits with ever fewer that offer their strategic plan online. Because of this, NEH strongly encourages you to propose ways to share your climate plans with your staff, board members, community leaders, sister organizations, and volunteers. Public dissemination of the final plan not only encourages accountability, but also demonstrates community leadership and engagement, and hopefully encourages other humanities organizations to follow suit in this type of planning.

22:07

In this program, you can propose to undertake planning efforts for your organization alone or as part of a consortium of humanities organizations in the same location or region. Consortium proposals consist of two or more humanities organizations working together on strategic planning for climate change, and it might include sharing consultants, training, or resources. Project outcomes should include actionable climate smart strategic plans for each consortium member and/or a detailed actionable climate smart plan for future partnership activities, including the roles and responsibilities of each consortium member. Examples of joint activities could include utilizing consultants or sharing staff with different-sized organizations to support comprehensive strategic planning for climate change. So, if one organization wants (or is able to) hire a sustainability officer that can be shared with other humanities organizations as part of a consortium proposal. You might work towards establishing a mutual aid network with shared emergency supplies, training with first responders, and contracts for remediation services after severe weather events. You might plan for shared resources, such as sourcing alternative energy collections storage spaces, or transportation partnerships that result in mutual benefit, lower costs, and a reduced carbon footprint. You could initiate collective efforts to meet some of these organizational state or local targets, such as emission or energy use reduction, building



standards, or zero waste goals. Or you could establish partnerships that facilitate reuse and repurposing of materials, supplies, and other resources.

24:03

If you decide to apply on behalf of a consortium, one organization must be the lead applicant and will be legally and fiscally responsible for the grant. Depending on your plans, other organizations may be subrecipients if they're receiving project funds or simply part of the consortium if they're not directly receiving funds. Regardless of structure, your application must explicitly name each consortium member and include a letter of commitment stating their roles and responsibilities for this project. The primary application should be from a humanities organization. It may not be from a larger non-humanities organization proposing to offer training, and if you have questions about that we can discuss them offline or in a separate call. For a consortium application, all participants receiving project funds (which are the NEH funds plus the required one-to-one match) must be humanities organizations, and I will talk a little bit next about what that exactly means.

25:07

So, while NEH wishes we could support climate planning for any nonprofit that applies, our authorizing legislation requires us to support advancement in the humanities. This will be a key review criteria, and we ask you to explain how the resulting plan will directly benefit your ability to deliver humanities programming, protect humanities assets, etc. Organizations that do not work primarily in the humanities, such as those that focus on delivering social services, the creation or performance of art, or delivery of general education are generally not going to be eligible applicants in this program. We recognize that defining the humanities can be incredibly tricky, even for those that have worked in this area our entire lives. But we refer back to our authorizing legislation, which states that the term "humanities" includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, linguistics, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, archaeology, comparative religion, ethics, the history, criticism, and theory of the arts, those aspect 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 the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life. So, many of you are probably asking what this looks like in practice. And we anticipate that most of the applications that we receive will be from museums, libraries, archives, historic sites, humanities councils, historic homes, and humanities-centered subunits of colleges and universities.

27:00

So, of course, nothing is clear-cut. In some cases, a large, non-humanities organization might apply on behalf of a humanities-based subunit. This is mostly likely to occur if a municipality would like to apply on behalf of a local historic society, perhaps, or a university would apply on behalf of a museum or library. Other possibilities might include a humanities section of a larger non-humanities organization, such as an archive associated with a botanical garden. In all applications, but especially these, the proposal should clearly and succinctly state how the resulting climate smart strategic plan would directly benefit the preservation of humanities collections, delivery of humanities programming, or access to humanities-centered spaces. Completed plans must be specific to the subunits named in the application, so for example, they

can't simply be mentioned as part of a larger comprehensive strategic planning effort. And as always, please reach out to us at NEH with any questions about eligibility.

28:04

So, in addition to determining if you're an eligible humanities applicant, we have a number of other eligible applicants that you see listed here. So, in general, any nonprofit organization with 501c3 status, accredited public 501c3 higher education institutions, state and local government agencies, federally recognized Native American tribal governments, and again, you must work wholly within the humanities. If you are a current recipient of an award from the Office of Challenge programs, you may apply to the Climate Smart Humanities program if you're in the final calendar year of your period of performance. If your project is selected for funding, NEH will not issue the Climate Smart Humanities award until you have completed all of the activities of the active Challenge project. And again, reach out to us if you have questions about that or if you're a current Challenge recipient. This restriction only applies to awards issued through the Office of Challenge Programs. You may have multiple applications and awards through any of the other NEH offices or divisions.

29:17

Fundraising is what sets Challenge programs apart from most of the other programs at National Endowment for the Humanities, and it's what puts the Challenge in Challenge grants. This program is not an exception. Having funds to match is a great motivator for potential donors, board members, and it can help expand your base of support within the community and nationally. In this program, NEH requires you to raise \$1 in third-party, non-federal funds for each dollar requested from NEH. Gifts may be from individual donors, foundation, state grants, or other sources. However, you may not use your organization's own operating budget to meet the match and in-kind gifts of staff time, materials, and services are also not allowable for matching. If you're applying with a consortium of other humanities organizations, their organizational funds may also not serve as donations for the match, although they can absolutely participate in fundraising and receive third-party, non-federal gifts from their board and the general public. When you think about your total project budget that you're going to propose to NEH, it should include the funds requested from NEH as well as your matching funds. So, if your total project budget will be \$100,000, you would request \$50,000 from NEH and you would be required to certify \$50,000 in third-party gifts that would be spent on project activities. The maximum amount that you can request from NEH is \$300,000 for a total project budget of \$600,000. But keep in mind that requests should be appropriate to the type of activities you're undertaking, your ability to fundraise, and the number of participating institutions. Some of you may have lots of in-house expertise and really only need a project budget of \$10,000-\$20,000 to make a transformative long-term organizational change. That's great, and we still hope that you apply. Larger consortium projects with multiple consultants and assessments may require much larger project budgets. Great, we want you to apply too! So please don't worry that you're requesting too little funds or too much funds, we just want you to justify what you're requesting in your application.

31:44

Fundraising to undertake strategic planning is really unusual but is absolutely essential to this program. We hope that the process of raising the required match will help motivate board and community investment in the long-term health of your humanities organization and raise



awareness of the importance of climate smart strategic planning. In addition to individual gifts, you may want to look for private foundations interested in climate work as well as state and local grants. Federal funds, even those that are passed through state or local budgets, are also not an allowable source of matching funds. And this especially comes into play with American Rescue Plan funds. You're not required to have all of your gifts in hand at the time of application, but you have the option of certifying gifts or pledges with the application, and we encourage you to do so to the extent possible. If you have a board member that offers to provide a gift if the grant is made, please include that pledge documentation with your application. You're also not required to have all gifts raised at one time. If you have partial funds raised at the time of the application, that is fine too. If your application is successful, all of your gifts and pledges must be raised and certified by July 31, 2024, which is approximately one year into the grant. Because NEH cannot make our funds available for drawdown until after you've certified gifts, this early deadline ensures that there's still plenty of time left in your two-year period of performance to spend down the NEH funds and complete project activities.

33:23

We have talked about what climate smart strategic planning might look like and the general parameters of what is an allowable application and source of funding. Now, if you want to apply, I'll spend the second half of this webinar talking about that process and how to develop your project. The first step towards developing an application is to fully read the Notice of Funding Opportunity on our website. It's very detailed but lays out everything you'll need to know about the application and key information. If you read through it and still have questions, please send us an e-mail or call; we'll be happy to answer questions at any point. Once you have completely read through the Notice of Funding Opportunity, begin to think about your project team and start talking with them about what climate smart strategic planning looks like for your humanities organization. Since these grants are intended to result in transformative organizational change, your project team should include participants from all levels of the organization, including board members, executive leadership, front of house workers, development staff, facilities, and volunteers. If you're at a university with a sponsored project office, they should also be brought in early to inform submission deadlines and project management considerations. The planning team should also evaluate the current staff knowledge and expertise and consider what type of consultants might be required for a successful outcome. We encourage you to identify these consultants and include a letter of commitment from them in the application. However, this is not required.

35:02

Once your project team is established, you should then begin thinking about the types of assessments and activities you want to undertake during the two-year grant period and how they will inform a final climate smart plan. While NEH encourages you to undertake a wide range of complementary assessments, you should also consider organizational capacity and any information you might already have on hand, such as past energy and water use, long-term climate data, the impact of past climatic events on operations, and any ongoing state, local, or regional planning efforts that might align with your work. These assessment activities will likely take the form of energy audits, carbon footprints assessments, waste analysis, and all of the other types of assessment that I talked about with mitigation and adaptation. You may include in your application the associated costs, which would be things like staff time, hiring of temporary staff or consultants, meetings and listening sessions, collecting data, development of

the final strategic plan, outreach, and development of conceptual plans for future climate smart implementation.

36:14

We've tried to leave this program as open-ended as possible, but there's still a number of unallowable activities and costs. Please see the NOFO for the full list, but some key unallowable activities include the preparation of applications for tax credits or other forms of financing. It may be that some activities proposed in your climate smart strategic plan do lead to your ability to obtain tax credits, and that's fabulous. You're encouraged to do that, you just can't use NEH or matching funds specifically to seek tax credits or prepare those applications or any supporting materials. You may also not undertake advanced design that precludes the consideration of other alternatives, so you can meet with engineers and consultants to inform opportunities for building improvements, but you can't start working on construction drawings for future renovations or rehabilitation. So, the idea is that you get a general sense of costs for potential options, but if the drawings have sufficient enough detail to allow for procurement or budgeting, those are unallowable. And this is because such activities could trigger Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, or potentially the National Environmental Policy Act. NEH is not allowed to release funds until after we perform internal reviews for projects that trigger those, and for a two-year project it could extend the length of your project significantly. So, if you do intentionally or inadvertently include any activities that would trigger Section 106 or the National Environmental Policy Act, we will review the budget for those and remove them from your project scope. And it may include an according budget reduction in the final offer. And finally, this program does not support projects that are not comprehensive in their planning or seek to advance commercial interests. While there are many fantastic public-private partnerships that install community solar, for example, NEH supported projects should focus on the whole of operations and assess and range of possible energy options rather than seeking to plan for a predetermined outcome.

38:40

Once you and your project team have settled on the general scope of your climate smart strategic planning, it's time to start physically preparing your application. And in our remaining time—which is not long, because I want to leave time for questions—I want to briefly review the major components you'll need to create and assemble. Some of the materials are standard forms, but for many of them you'll prepare a document, ultimately save it as a PDF to upload it to Grants.gov. There are a number of required elements that are listed here. This includes the project narrative that is a comprehensive framework and description of all of the aspects of the proposed project. It should be succinct, self-explanatory, and well-organized. This is where you're going to tell us exactly what you're going to do. You're going to tell us about your humanities significance and how climate smart planning will support long-term organizational health. You're going to tell us about the climate-related risks to your organization and opportunities in your community, and any steps that you've already taken towards developing mitigation and adaptation plans. Tell us about your fundraising, and you're going to do all of this in about—well, exactly—ten pages. So, you have to think very clearly and concisely as you lay out all of this information.

40:00

You're also required to submit a work plan and this work plan may be referenced in the narrative, but the separate attachment allows you to go into more detail about each step of your assessment process, who is responsible for it, and where in the two-year period of performance it will occur. The work plan can be a narrative or chart form, but should include specific milestones dates for key activities. You'll also develop a research and related budget, and the research and related budget is detailed and lengthy, so please read the instructions in the NOFO very carefully. For this program we want the budget for the full project costs, which is what you're requesting from NEH, in addition to the one-to-one required match. All of the costs, including those paid out of your matching funds, must be eligible and appropriate to the project. If you are working with a consortium, we ask you to include brief organizational profiles. Individual applicants have to submit a single institutional profile that details your staffing and humanities activities. For consortiums, we'd like brief institutional profiles, as well as their roles and responsibilities in the project. We ask that consortium members supply a letter of commitment--and if they'll be receiving funds, provide a separate sub-recipient research and related budget. Instruction for each of these are also found in the NOFO. And finally, if you do have any gifts to certify, please do go ahead and upload the gift certification form with your application package. In this, you'll detail the funds that you've raised, the sources of the funds, and we ask that you provide supporting documentation in the form of pledge letters for gifts that will be pledged over the course of the project.

41:54

Once all of these pieces are together, you're ready to begin uploading them into Grants.gov. Applications for NEH grants, like many federal grants, are submitted through a web portal called Grants.gov. It is a fairly smooth system, but if you've never applied for a federal grant before, it's worth spending some time getting familiar with it. You'll need to register at least a month in advance before applying, and if you're even considering applying for this program, and you don't have an active Grants.gov registration, I would encourage you to just go ahead and start getting that process rolling now. We strongly encourage you to apply early, in case you have any problems uploading your materials. And if your institution has a grants office, they can help; they do this all the time. Grants.gov support is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. After you submit your application on Grants.gov, make sure you have a confirmation email and make sure that your file formats are in the appropriate form in order to be transmitted to NEH. You can resubmit your application package up until the deadline, but no materials can be added after the deadline, including letters of recommendation or parts of the package that are formatted incorrectly. So, submit your application early and confirm the submission. You'll get an email when it's confirmed.

43:20

The supplementary cover sheet is a little bit tricky for Challenge programs, so I've included screenshots from Grants.gov with directions on how to properly fill out the budget request. You'll find the cover sheet under the mandatory forms. And I'll go through this quickly, but remember that the webinar and transcript will be posted on our website so you can refer back as a resource. Since Challenge Programs doesn't allow outright funds, the first highlighted box should be left empty, and you put the amount requested from NEH in the second and third boxes. Then in the fourth box, you'll indicate the amount you'll fundraise to receive those funds based on the matching ratio, and you'll see in this example it's a three-to-one ratio, which is what's used in our other program. In this case, it would be a one-to-one matching ratio for all of

the projects. And then in the last box you put the total project cost, which is the sum of the NEH award and the matching funds you will raise.

44:19

The review criteria that our panelists will use to evaluate your applications are listed here and they're detailed, more extensively, on pages thirty-three and thirty-four of the NOFO. So be sure to find them and read them closely, because this is how they will be evaluating your application. To the best of your ability, be sure to clearly include each one of these in your application narrative. You can even use the criteria as subject headings for clarity. The reviewers will be generalists, sometimes former project directors or participants, or individuals from a similar institution type. Be sure to write for this knowledgeable but generalized audience and avoid gaps or asking reviewers to make assumptions about your project expertise or staffing. I'll often stay to applicants that you don't want to confuse the reviewers because they're always going to assume the worst, so be very clear and don't assume that reviewers are going to know your staff or your institution, or even the types of risks that face your institution. If possible, ask a knowledgeable colleague to review your application with these criteria in mind and ask for feedback on how well your proposal responds to each of these areas.

45:33

Once your applications are assembled and submitted, then what happens? It gets very quiet for a number of months from your end, but we're very busy in the background. All applications for NEH grants go through a lengthy review process, which has several stages. The first step is going to be that NEH staff will review for eligibility and completeness. We make sure that all of the required forms are there and that you're an eligible organization. The next step, which is central to the work that we do at NEH, is the peer review panel. During this peer review process, evaluators read the applications, write comments, and post a rating. They'll then meet to discuss them and (probably virtually, in this world) provide feedback and comments to NEH staff. NEH staff will then review those comments and make our own recommendations, and those recommendations are considered by the National Council on the Humanities, which includes twenty-six individuals that are scholars in the humanities, nominated by the President and approved by the Senate. The Council will then make recommendations to the endowment's Chair, who takes all of this into consideration and makes the final decisions on which applications to recommend for funding. It's a very long process, but it allows for a rich review, and I hope it helps explain why it takes about a year between when your application is going to be submitted and when you're going to hear the result of the competition. After grants are announced, you can request comments from your evaluators and if the proposal is not funded, the comments can help you think about how to revise your proposal for next time.

47:08

So, I'm going to wrap up with just a few tips and reminders that apply to nearly all NEH programs, but especially this one. Reach out to use early with a short project description, especially for something like this, which is a new program, a new type of strategic planning. We're available to answer questions by email or phone, so please do reach out early. For a phone consultation, it's helpful to have the project director and someone from development on the call if you're going to be engaging in significant fundraising. Read all of the materials on our website and pay attention to required formatting for file names, budget convention, and page limits. There's nothing more heartbreaking than having to declare an application ineligible because of

formatting violations or exceeding the page limit. Involve all of your project participants in the application draft to the extent possible, and if you work with a grant writer, be sure that they're talking to your project team. Use NEH's search feature to find other institutions that may have already received a Challenge grant. Since this is the first round of this particular opportunity, there's not going to be organizations that have engaged in this type of strategic planning, but there will be ones that have received Challenge grants and have gone through the fundraising process. So please do see who's received grants in your area.

48:36

And perhaps most importantly, if you're able, send in a draft for comments. It's optional, but applicants have reported that the review and comments are extremely helpful both for developing their final application, but for their project in general. The draft deadline for this program is November 29<sup>th</sup> of this year. And then finally, please do request comments from the panelists, whether your application is successful or not. So that brings me to the end of my prepared remarks. Before I start taking questions, I want to just briefly acknowledge my colleagues behind the scenes that are working hard to answer questions and that have been instrumental in preparing this webinar, particularly Jess Unger, who I think may have also been in the comments as well. So thank you to the rest of the Challenge Office that is working on this webinar. So with that, I will stop sharing my screen and perhaps I have some of the questions up, but perhaps Stefanie or Jess could read out some themes that have come up with the questions.

**Stefanie Walker** 49:57

Jess, go ahead.

**Jess Unger** 50:00

Sure. So, the first that was had come in was from Amanda, who wants to know "if we have already secured a third-party gift, but would like to use NEH funds to expand the scope of the work, is this ok?"

**Tatiana Ausema** 50:15

Yes, if the third-party gift was given and planned for this type of strategic planning, and all of the activities are allowable, then yes, it is. It is an eligible gift. We never can make a final determination about eligibility; that's done through our Office of Grant Management, but from the brief description here, it does sound like it would be an allowable source of matching funds.

**Jess Unger** 50:42

And then we had a question from Emily: "the NOFO mentions that applicants seeking implementation support should consider the Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grants program. Since that program is not currently specific to climate-related action plans, will there be a prioritization of those types of projects during future grant cycles?"

**Tatiana Ausema** 51:02

That is a great question, and I would say at this point we don't know yet. You know, we would encourage implementation to submit to that program. And so much of how the two programs

work together will be dependent on the type of applications and projects that come out of this first round. So, I guess I would say stay tuned for that one.

**Jess Unger 51:33**

So here's a question about Section 106. It notes that "unallowable activities include anything that could trigger the Section 106 review. Does that automatically mean that a project that could affect a National Register listed site not qualify?"

**Tatiana Ausema 51:49**

No, absolutely not. So that's another really good question. National Register sites are absolutely eligible to apply for this program. It's only the activities that would involve planning for construction and would preclude consideration of other alternatives for the historic property. So, for example, if you wanted to look at options for roof replacement and you're trying to evaluate whether the slate roof or a different material would be appropriate given your climate. You can absolutely do that evaluation, you just can't start developing drawings and make a decision, because that's what would trigger the 106 review. You can do strategic planning for your operations for education, develop zero waste plans. All of those things are entirely eligible. It's just those things that impact construction that would be problematic.

**Jess Unger 53:03**

Haley asked, "as a humanities organization with multiple sites and different states, could we spread the funding out to multiple sites and projects?"

**Tatiana Ausema 53:15**

Yes, I think that would be absolutely allowable. It could be done as part of a consortium application, or it could, depending on how the organization is structured, it could absolutely be an individual organization. So, if it's sites in various states that would be fine.

**Jess Unger 53:41**

And then I skipped over an earlier question. John asks, "do all project activities have to be clearly identified as either mitigation or adaptation?"

**Tatiana Ausema 53:52**

No, the distinction between mitigation and adaptation is really more for thinking about how you might want to develop your project and the types of activities that tend to fall into those two buckets. But they do not have to be distinguished. There are many activities that kind of fall a little bit into each one of those buckets, so they do not have to be distinguished in the application.

**Jess Unger 54:25**

And John just asked, "could a liberal arts college use this funding to do a climate-related assessment of the entire campus?"

**Tatiana Ausema 54:36**

In short, no, because that would start to veer into that type of non-humanities activity. In a rare instance, I suppose, that a college only offered classes that fall within the humanities, and



perhaps it could be campuswide, but in general we would ask our college and university applicants to propose projects that focus just on the humanities institutions at their university or college. So, for example, if the university has set zero waste goals or carbon neutral goals with a particular timeline, and the library needs to figure out what that means for their building and operations, they could apply on behalf of the library, but not for a campus-wide assessment that would set those initial goals.

**Jess Unger** 55:35

Great, thank you. I believe those are all the questions that we currently have. We have one more coming in from Amanda, “what about a children’s museum that mainly has humanities collections and exhibits, but also has some STEM and art content?”

**Tatiana Ausema** 55:50

That, you know, there are some organizations that are going to be a little bit tricky like children’s museums. So, in those cases, we would really ask you to spend a good part of your application talking about how much of your programming is humanities. How do you use those collections? Children’s museums kind of run the gamut it seems in terms of the degree to which humanities is part of their mission and programming and exhibitions. If it is genuinely the case that it is a thread that runs through, you know, a majority of those activities, then spell it out in the application and that will be part of the review criteria. And then you can talk about in the application how the final climate smart plan will inform your operations and support those humanities activities.

**Jess Unger** 56:57

Great. Well, thank you! It looks like that’s possibly the end of the questions for now. In case others are typing, we can hold tight, but thank you so much.

**Tatiana Ausema** 57:11

Yeah, thank you! And I’m looking over to the screen on the side and I don’t see any other questions. So just in case there are any others, I’ll just quick wrap up and say that we’re really grateful that you’ve joined us for this webinar. If you have colleagues or know of other institutions that may be interested in engaging in this type of planning, please do refer them to this NOFO. Refer them to this webinar, and even if they’re not quite ready to apply for this program, encourage them to think about this as an important part of institutional health and long-term strategic planning, and know that here at NEH we’re here to support this work to whatever extent we can as you start thinking about your application. And Jess, thank you for including the email. [Challenge@neh.gov](mailto:Challenge@neh.gov) is the best way to reach us and your question or comment will be referred to the appropriate program officer that way. It looks like there was a final question about the webinar being on the website. It will be on the website within a week or so, along with the transcript, so if there’s any parts that you missed or if I cut out at some point, there will be a cleaned-up version available to see. Well, thank you again to all of you. Best wishes in all of your humanities endeavors and we look forward to hearing from you over the next few months. Take care!

