

TRANSCRIPT
NEH WEBINAR FOR CLIMATE SMART HUMANITIES ORGANIZATIONS GRANT
JUNE 25th, 2024

Tatiana Ausema 00:01

I think it looks like everyone that was waiting in the waiting room is in. Welcome to everyone, and welcome to the prospective applicant webinar for NEH's Climate Smart Humanities Organizations program. I am Tatiana Ausema, I'm a senior program officer in the Office of Challenge programs and I'm so glad that you decided to join us today to learn more about how your organization can engage in climate-informed strategic planning and how hopefully this grant program might be able to help get you started. Over the course of the next hour, I'm going to try to answer some questions that you may have about this opportunity and the application process.

Tatiana Ausema 00:45

First, just a couple housekeeping items. You'll see there's a meeting chat feature. If you have questions as the webinar goes along, or simply want to introduce yourself to others in the meeting, please feel free to use the chat. My colleagues will be monitoring the chat and may answer some questions directly as the webinar goes on, but we may decide to hold on to other questions to ask at the end of the webinar. So please feel free to enter them in there at any point. I'm hoping to have at least 15 minutes at the end to respond to questions. The webinar is being recorded and the recording and transcript will be available within a week or so. If you'd like to use the automated closed captioning feature, please click on the three dots to open the menu and select 'turn on live captions.' Before we get started with the actual content of this webinar, I'd like to introduce Stefanie Walker, the Director of Challenge Programs, to offer a welcome and a few thoughts about the program: Stefanie?

Stefanie Walker 01:53

Thank you, Tatiana. Let me also say hello and welcome you to this webinar on the Climate Smart Humanities Organizations Program. As Tatiana said and the slide shows, I'm Stefanie Walker, Director of the Office of Challenge programs at NEH. Just a short word about Challenge Programs: our office was created in 1977 and has offered different kinds of challenge grants that aim to strengthen the institutional base of the humanities by investing in projects and activities that have a long-term impact. All Challenge grants require matching with nonfederal gifts at a ratio of at least one to one, sometimes more. So, we're very excited to introduce you to Climate Smart, our newest program, and I'm delighted to see so many of you in attendance here today.

Tatiana Ausema 03:04

Great. Thank you so much, Stefanie, for that welcome. Over the next 45 minutes or so, I'd like to introduce you all to the concept of climate-informed strategic planning and how NEH's Climate Smart program might support these efforts at your humanities institution. I'll begin with why NEH has launched this new program, which is now in its second year, and the importance of developing climate action and adaptation plans. We'll move into some details about program structure, and close with considerations that you may want to think about as you start developing your project. We will wrap up with an overview of how to apply for challenge grants, the review process, and review criteria, and I'll leave you at the end with some action items, next steps, tips, and resources.

Tatiana Ausema 03:55

We were so excited to see such a wide range of attendees registered for today's webinar, and so while I hope that many of your organizations will apply, we want all of you to leave today with a better understanding of this program and what you can do, regardless if you plan to submit an application this year. At the end of the webinar, we hope that you will feel ready to apply as an individual organization or to partner with organizations to apply as a consortium. For some of you, you might be here because you're interested in working with applicants as a consultant or facilitator. You wouldn't be submitting the application, but you might be supporting development of an application and even consulting with multiple applicants. We are thrilled to have excellent representation from our State Humanities Councils and museum organizations today, and so while all of you are likely eligible to apply on behalf of your own organization, you may also be here to learn more and share this information with your existing networks or funding organizations that might be interested in providing a match to applicants. And finally, I hope that everyone here today leaves better prepared to start the conversation about climate smart strategic planning within your organization and community. This work can't wait for when we have more time or resources or expertise. We all need to consider now how we can increase resilience and ensure we can continue to do transformative work in the humanities.

Tatiana Ausema 05:32

I will return to this at the end but know that all of the details for applying to this program can be found on any NEH's website. From the NEH homepage, you can click on 'Grants' which will take you to an option to search by program or by division. Challenge programs is the first listing on the page and this is also where the webinar recording will be posted, as well as program resources as they are developed. On this page you can also find sample narratives from successful past applications, and we encourage you to take advantage of those. The most important item on this web page is the link to the Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO. If after this webinar you decide that the program might be a good fit for your organization, please read the NOFO carefully for instructions and application requirements. It's a lengthy document but contains crucial information for your project and for your application to be successful. The page also contains key dates that you'll want to keep in mind when preparing your application, any programmatic updates that happen throughout the next couple months, and contact information for our division.

Tatiana Ausema 06:45

Many of you that have worked with the Office of Challenge programs before may associate our work with brick and mortar construction projects, or if you've worked with NEH for a while, perhaps endowments at colleges and universities. But as Stefanie mentioned, our division's mission is much broader. We 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 shared history that only work in the humanities can bring to the community. The 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 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 community they serve, while also establishing actions that reduce the organizations' direct impact on the environment.

Tatiana Ausema 08:20

While this is a relatively new form of strategic planning, it is absolutely essential for humanities organizations to begin this work now. For many of us in the continental United States, we're viewing this webinar in the midst of a heat wave. Colleagues in the Midwest are enduring yet another year of flooding and evacuations as infrastructure is overwhelmed by rainfall, and humanities organizations in the northeast are facing energy rationing and potential brownouts as the electric grid struggles to keep up with demand. And these three articles here are just from the past 48 hours and as all of us know well, they'll likely be more this summer. Even basic strategic planning efforts can start to address some of these immediate threats. They can reduce energy costs, improve safety, mitigate environmental impact, and increase resilience. The time and money invested in planning now will allow you and your organization to continue to serve your community throughout this ongoing period of change, but perhaps also be a model for other organizations seeking to do the same type of planning.

Tatiana Ausema 9:28

You might be attending today's webinar because you know that planning for climate impacts is important, but your organization doesn't have the staff, funding, experience, or even quite know where to begin. For example, many towns or university campuses might have set a climate goal to be carbon neutral by 2030, which is coming up very quickly, or establish zero-waste goals. What concrete steps can you actually take to meet those goals? What data do you need to establish a baseline and how are you going to measure success? Is environmental impact the same as your carbon footprint? Or alternatively, you might have had some basic energy assessments done, but are unsure of next steps or how to move from a building-focused assessment to something more comprehensive that encompasses all of your operations. And of course, there is always the question of staffing and costs. What are the risks and opportunities associated with being carbon neutral or zero waste? How do you budget and pay for all of these changes and mandates that are coming from all different directions? And how do we convince staff, leadership, and members of the public that this is important and necessary work?

Tatiana Ausema 10:42

Alternatively, perhaps your concern is more aligned with how climate impacts might affect your mission or buildings through severe weather events or rising sea levels. Which programs might be impacted by dangerous daytime temperatures? How does the risk of increased temperature compare to inland flooding, perhaps, or even wildfire? What are the costs associated with relocating some or all of your operations, and how would that impact your community and your audiences? What other hazards might you be facing that you're not even thinking about yet? And you might also be wondering how you can best work with other humanities organizations to help prepare for and respond to climate events.

Tatiana Ausema 11:28

All of the questions—and more—can be answered through comprehensive assessments and subsequent development of an associated strategic action plan. With NEH support and third-party, nonfederal matching funds you can pay staff or consultants to gather data on current operations, contract with expert consultants, engage in organizational and community listening sessions, provide training, weigh options, and 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 organization can become climate smart.

Tatiana Ausema 12:08

As you may know, 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 changes scenarios to protect humanities-focused institutional assets and facilities). You can see on this Venn diagram here how mitigation and adaptation are separate but overlap on quite a few activities and areas. I'm going to talk about mitigation and adaptation separately, but just as this Venn diagram shows that there's a large area of overlap, we encourage you to propose projects that include both. The key is developing a project and assessment plans that are appropriate to your organization's needs, capacity, and ability.

Tatiana Ausema 13:08

Mitigation activities inform a comprehensive climate plan or 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 are going to include an inventory of existing emissions and waste production, energy audits or benchmarking, emission reduction or clean energy targets, and a prioritized reduction actions and resources necessary to achieve stated goals. Comprehensive Climate Action Plans should be based on multiple building and operational assessments, and these can include energy audits of your building, land use, utilities, operations, facilities. It could include calculating the organization's carbon footprint, including greenhouse gas emissions, energy sources, transportation, material use, and supplies. It can include testing your existing machinery such as HVAC, natural gas, water, and other systems to improve efficiency, and it can include installation of energy waste or carbon footprint monitoring and sub metering equipment to measure consumption.

Tatiana Ausema 14:22

NEH doesn't require or endorse any particular tools or resources for your organization's assessments and data gathering. However, we have seen that that's one of the largest barriers to starting this type of work. How do you begin? What are the resources? And, unfortunately—and part of the reason NEH developed this program—is there's very few examples of climate action plans prepared by U.S.-based humanities organizations to use as models. That said, many states and municipalities have climate action plans online that might offer a sense of that is possible, and the type of assessments you may want to consider proposing in your application. The first place to look to see if you have a local climate action plan would be on the website of your local municipality. Department of Energy and municipal governments also maintain lists of various climate action plans and targets established during local planning processes. If your community has an existing climate action plan, either at the campus level, town level, county level or even at the state level, consider how your humanities organization might align with work already being done in this area. Reach out to municipal leaders and your local energy companies to find out what resources they might be able to provide or already have ready to go. Be sure to mention that you may be seeking funding from NEH. Many communities have grant programs that may be eligible to use as matching funds for this climate smart program.

Tatiana Ausema 15:51

Once you've determined if there are existing local targets and resources, you'll need to plan for your own organization. Most climate action plans will begin with an energy audit and the best place to begin with this is looking at your local energy provider and see what they offer to nonprofit organizations in terms of tools to track and manage energy use. If they don't have a built-in system for tracking that you can 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 have one) may have other suggestions. The key is that there's lots of free resources out there. There's also lots of resources you can pay for. It's a matter of finding one that fits the capacity and scale of your organization. Depending on your organizational complexity, you may also 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 best practices and assessments for three levels of assessments. This comprehensive energy audit will likely look beyond just energy use and look at all operations to develop a carbon or ecological footprint. It may look at waste production, water use, transportation to establish baseline information for you organization and it can be done in consultation with outside experts, contractors and consultants, or you could use existing or temporary staff to coordinate efforts in-house.

Tatiana Ausema 17:24

Once assessments and data collection are complete, you're ready to write your climate action plan. The final plan should build upon these assessments and set intentions for short, medium, and long term organizational actions such as looking at alternative energy sources including solar, geothermal, wind, hydrogen fuel cells, as possible long-term cost efficient and sustainable options. You might identify building improvements that would result in increased operational efficiencies and lower energy use. You might consider landscape improvements such as reforestation or native ground cover to better support environmental conditions and offset carbon producing activities. And you may encourage lower carbon transportation options for visitors, staff, and operations, such as bicycle and pedestrian access, public transportation, and ridesharing. And finally, you may decide to establish an organizational recycling, composting, reuse, and water reduction plan.

Tatiana Ausema 18:28

As I've mentioned before, adaptation activities inform comprehensive climate vulnerability assessment or similar risk-based adaptation plan that identifies the likelihood of future climate hazards and their potential impact on your humanities organization's, buildings, operations, finances, programming, staff, and audiences. A risk-based adaptation plan generally includes an assessment of demographic and environmental context, impact of past climatic events, modeling of climate trends and future scenarios, and a prioritized list of action steps and resources required to reduce risk and hazards. A comprehensive climate adaptation plan should be informed by multiple types of risk based assessments, such as examining location specific hazards associated with sea level rise, extreme weather, flooding, or wildfire, assessing buildings and grounds to determine capacity to withstand current and future climatic events, evaluating the impact of changing environmental conditions on programs and operations such as timing and location of events, operating hours and seasonal programming, collecting data to record trends and temperature, weather, and other climate related events over time, assessing current emergency and continuity of operation plans to align with climate-smart strategic planning, and to support the humanities mission of your organization.

Tatiana Ausema 19:56

As with mitigation planning, adaptation planning requires the use of different resources and consultants. But again, NEH does not require or promote the use of any one particular platform, consultant, or resource or over another. For adaptation-related assessments, your organization may want to consult risk maps that exist to determine which climate related hazards exist in your area. The newly released Climate Resilience Resources can be a good starting point for assessing risk. This tool, which my colleague John put in the chat along with some other tools, integrates information from across the federal government to help people consider their local exposure to climate related hazards. The federal government and its partners offer a number of other freely available resources such as [disasterassistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov) which is operated by FEMA, [climate.gov](https://www.climate.gov) operated by NOAA, and numerous agency level resources such as the National Park Service's Primer on Disaster Preparedness Management and Response. Local networks such as Alliance for Response, which is supported by the Foundation for Advancement and Conservation and also NEH funding, can also be excellent resources. There's a link in the chat to see if you have one in your area, and if you don't, consider starting one. Climate Smart funds could be used by consortiums to work together and make their own plans and train with local first responders. You may also decide to engage directly with engineers to determine building or site capacity to withstand extreme events or assess systems and their ability to manage increased rainfall, extreme temperatures, or particulates associated with wildfire.

Tatiana Ausema 21:42

Once all of these assessments are complete, you're ready to write your Climate Adaptation Plan. The resulting adaptation plan may set intentions for short, medium or long term actions for your organization, such as developing conceptual plans to retrofit, relocate, or strengthen existing building systems and landscaping, considering climate smart water management such as reduction of impervious surfaces and water recycling reuse efforts that capture rainfall, establishing an emergency and continuity of operation plans and training for staff, volunteers, and visitors, development of mutual aid networks of related humanities organizations in a geographic area, and establishing community partnerships that support the organization's adaptation and resilience efforts.

Tatiana Ausema 22:32

While you can focus exclusively on mitigation or adaptation, remember that part in the middle of the Venn diagram where we encourage you to think broadly in your proposal to NEH and develop a comprehensive climate-informed strategic plan that presents options to both reduce your organization's impact on the environment and its vulnerability to climatic events. Because of this, NEH strongly encourages you to propose ways to engage and then share your climate plans with your staff, board members, community leaders, 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 addition, cultural organizations such as museums and libraries and universities are often trusted local resources for members of the public that might find the national discourse surrounding climate confusing, frightening, or overwhelming. Seeing that you and your organization is doing the hard work of planning can encourage others to do the same.

Tatiana Ausema 23:41

In your application to NEH, you can propose undertaking planning efforts for your organization alone or as part of a consortium of humanities organizations, usually in the same location or region, or that have similar collections or interests. Consortium proposals consist of two or more humanities organizations working together on this strategic planning for climate change process, and could include sharing consultants, training, or resources. Project outcomes must include an actionable climate smart strategic plan for each consortium member, or a detailed, actionable climate smart plan for future partnership activities, including roles and responsibilities of each member. Joint activities could include things like utilizing consultants or sharing existing staff with smaller humanities organizations. You could establish a mutual aid network of institutions with shared emergency supplies, training with first responders and contracts for remediation. You could plan for shared resources such as sourcing alternative energy, shared collection storage spaces, or transportation partnerships that result in mutual benefit, lower costs, and reduced carbon footprint. A consortium could initiate collective efforts to meet organizational state or local climate targets such as emissions or energy use reduction, building standards or zero waste goals. You could establish partnerships that facilitate reuse and repurposing of materials, or develop shared climate literacy efforts for staff, visitors, students, and other users.

Tatiana Ausema 25:18

If you are applying on behalf of a consortium or thinking about reaching out to other organizations to form a consortium, know that one organization must be the lead applicant and will be legally and fiscally responsible for the grant. Depending on your plans, other organizations may end up being subrecipients if they are receiving project funds or simply part of the consortium if they're not directly receiving funds. Regardless of structure, your application should explicitly name each consortium member and include a letter of commitment stating their roles and responsibilities for the project. For a consortium application, all participants receiving project funds—which are the NEH funds plus the required one-to-one nonfederal match—must be able to clearly state how the resulting climate smart plan will preserve and protect humanities resources, programming, sites, or structures.

Tatiana Ausema 26:11

While we wish we could support climate smart planning for any nonprofit that applies, NEH's authorizing legislation requires us to support advancement of the humanities. This will be a key review criterion and we will look to you to explain how your resulting plan or plans will directly benefit your ability to deliver humanities programming, protect humanities assets, etc. Organizations that don't work primarily in the humanities, such as those that focus on delivering social services, the creation and performance of art, or the delivery of general education, are generally not going to be eligible applicants. We recognize, though, that defining the humanities can be incredibly tricky. But we always refer back to our authorizing legislation, which is on this slide and also 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, and those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods.” What does this look like in practice? We anticipate that most of our applications are going to come from museums, libraries, archives, historic sites, Humanities Councils, historic homes, and humanities-centered subunits of colleges and universities.

Tatiana Ausema 27:48

Of course, none of this is clear cut. In some cases, a large, non-humanities organization might be applying on behalf of a humanities-based subunit. This is most likely to occur if a municipality would like to apply on behalf of a local historic society, perhaps, or a university would like to 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 perhaps, or a zoo. In all applications, but especially these, the proposal should clearly and succinctly state how the resulting climate smart strategic plan will directly benefit the preservation of humanities collections, the delivery of humanities programming, and access to humanities centered spaces. The completed plans must be specific to the units named in the application, so you can't simply mention those as part of a larger comprehensive strategic planning effort. If you have any questions about that, we can discuss them at the end of this webinar, and you can always reach out to us with questions about eligibility.

Tatiana Ausema 28:56

In addition to determining if you're an eligible humanities applicant, there are a few other considerations regarding eligibility, and these are fairly standard across NEH. You must be a U.S. nonprofit organization with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, you can be an accredited public and 501(c)(3) higher education institution. State and local governmental agencies are eligible applicants. Federally recognized Native American tribal governments are eligible. And, as I said before, you have to demonstrate a connection with the humanities in order to be an eligible applicant.

Tatiana Ausema 29:37

Fundraising is what sets Challenge Programs apart from most of the other programs at National Endowment for the Humanities, and it puts the “challenge” in the term “challenge grants,” and this program is not an exception. Having funds to match from the federal government can be a great motivator for potential donors. It's a great way to get your board and leadership involved, and it can help expand your base of support within the community and nationally. In this program, NEH requires you to raise one dollar in third-party, nonfederal funds for every dollar requested from NEH. Gifts may be from individual donors, foundations, state grants, or other sources, but you can't use your organization's own operating budget to meet the match. 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, they may also not serve as donors for the match by using their operational funds, but they can absolutely participate in fundraising, and we encourage that.

Tatiana Ausema 30:44

When you think about your total project budget, it should include the funds requested from NEH as well as the 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, and that entire amount would need to be spent on project activities that are listed in your budget. In this program, you can request up to \$300,000 from NEH for a total project budget of up to \$600,000. Requests should be appropriate to the type of activities that you're undertaking: your ability to fundraise, 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 transformative organizational change. Great! We hope you apply; that's fantastic. 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 think that your request will be too large or too small for us to consider.

Tatiana Ausema 31:49

Fundraising to undertake strategic planning is 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 looking at individual gifts, you may want to consider private foundations that are interested in climate work as well as state and local grants. Federal funds, even those that pass through state or local budgets, are not an allowable source of matching funds. But you can use corporate donations, or state funds that are not part of federal funds. When you apply, you're not required to have all of the funds in hand with the application, but you do have the option of certifying gifts or pledges with the application and encourage you to do so if you, to the extent possible. If you have gifts in hand, please go ahead and include them with the application. If your project is recommended for funding, you will be required to certify at least 25% of your required match before you may begin your project. This is because NEH funds will only be released as you raise and certify funds, and so by certifying 25% of them up front, you'll have available money to start your work. Once you have certified 25% of your funds, the remaining 75% must be raised and certified by March 31st of 2026, which is approximately one year into the grant.

Tatiana Ausema 33:21

So, we've talked about what climate smart strategic planning might look like and the general parameters of what is an allowable application and source of funding. So, if you still want to apply, I'm going to be spending the second half of this webinar (second third of the webinar) talking about the application process and how to develop your project. The first step towards applying is to fully read the NOFO 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, send us an email or call. We are happy to answer questions at any point and I will say that a number of times through the last part of this webinar. Once you've read through the NOFO, 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 what type of consultants might be required for 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.

Tatiana Ausema 35:00

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—and we've included some resources of where you might start—you should also consider any organizational capacity and information you already have on hand, such as past energy, water use, long term climate data, the impact of past events on operations, and any ongoing state, local or regional planning efforts that might align with your work. Assessment activities will likely include energy audits,

carbon footprint assessments, waste analysis, physical building inspections, staff or visitor surveys, and evaluation of existing plans. You might want to look at associated costs, including staff time, hiring of temporary staff, meetings and listening sessions, collecting data, and of course, don't forget to include costs associated with development of the final strategic plan, publicizing it in your community and with your leadership, and possible development of conceptual plans for future Climate Smart implementation.

Tatiana Ausema 36:18

So, I mentioned possible future plans for implementation. At this point, the Climate Smart Organizations program only funds planning efforts. We don't support any implementation efforts in this program. We've left it as open ended as possible within that planning process, but there's still a number of unallowable costs and activities. They're listed on page 35 of the NOFO, but some key unallowable activities include preparing applications for tax credits or other forms of financing. It may of course be that some activities proposed in your Climate Smart strategic plan can lead to your ability to obtain tax credits. That's great; you just can't use NEH or matching funds to specifically seek tax credits or prepare applications. You can't use these funds for advanced design that precludes the consideration of other alternatives. This includes construction drawings for future renovations or rehabilitations. You can absolutely work with contractors to get a general sense of costs of various potential options, but drawings in sufficient detail to allow for procurement or detailed budgeting are unallowable, and this is largely because those activities would trigger Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, or possibly the National Environmental Policy Act. We put a link in the chat to see how to determine where your project falls between planning and implementation, so please check that out if you have any questions and we're happy to also follow up with you. Any activities that would normally trigger review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act are not going to be allowable and this would include detailed construction drawings, but also specific plans for future ground disturbing activities such as wetland restoration and reforestation. Finally, NEH will 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, an NEH-supported project should focus on whole of operations and assess a range of possible energy options rather than seeking to plan for a predetermined outcome.

Tatiana Ausema 38:34

Once you've settled on the general scope of your climate smart planning, it's time to start physically preparing your application. And in our last remaining minutes, I want to briefly review some major components you'll need to create and assemble for your application. Some of these materials are standard forms, but for many of them you'll prepare a document and ultimately save it as a PDF for uploading into Grants.gov. Please follow formatting requirements and naming conventions carefully, and I can't emphasize that enough. We have to review for material eligibility, and when page limits and required attachments are missing, we are not able to accept those late after they've been submitted. So, the key thing that you're going to be working on is the narrative. That is 10 pages that provide a comprehensive framework and description of all aspects of your proposed project. It should be succinct, self explanatory, and well organized. It's where you're going to tell us exactly what you're going to do. You're going to tell us about the humanities significance and how climate smart planning will support long term organizational health. You'll tell us about climate related risks and opportunities in your community, and any steps you've already taken towards developing mitigation and adaptation

plans. You'll tell us about your fundraising, and you're going to do all of this in 10 pages, so you have to think very clearly and concisely as you lay out all of this information. You should reference your work plan in the narrative, but this is a separate attachment that 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 narrative or chart form, but it should include specific milestone dates for key activities. You'll include a budget. The research and related budget is detailed and lengthy, so please read instructions in the NOFO carefully. For this program, I want to reemphasize that we want to budget for the full project costs, which is what you're requesting from NEH in addition to the required one-to-one match. All costs must be eligible and appropriate to the project. If you're considering applying as a consortium, then please include an attachment with a brief institutional profile of all of the participating organizations, as well as their roles and responsibilities in the project. Each organization should also supply a letter of commitment to the project, and if they will be receiving funds, a separate sub-recipient research and related budget will also be required. And as I mentioned before, you're not required to certify gifts, but if you do have any gifts on hand at the time of application, we strongly encourage you to include the gift certification form so that we can process those gifts.

Tatiana Ausema 41:22

Once you've assembled all of the application pieces, you're ready to begin uploading them, and this is a screenshot from Grants.gov. And in Grants.gov, that is how you will submit all of your application materials. This is the federal government site for almost all of its federal grant making. It's a fairly smooth system, but if you are not familiar with it, it would be good for you to spend some time now logging in and becoming familiar before you submit the application.

You'll need to register at least a month before applying, and we strongly urge you to apply early as it can get overwhelmed in the five minutes before the midnight deadline. If your institution has a Grant Office, they can help. They do this all the time, and support from Grants.gov is available 24/7. NEH is generally not able to provide technical support for Grants.gov, but we are happy to point you in the right direction if you encounter an error.

Tatiana Ausema 42:22

And very briefly, I've included a few screenshots from Grants.gov with directions on how to properly fill out your budget request on the supplementary cover sheet because it's a little bit confusing. You'll find the cover sheet under mandatory forms on Grants.gov and I'll go through it quickly, but remember that the webinar and transcript will be posted on our website, so you can refer back to this as a resource. Since Challenge grants 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 indicate the amount you fundraise to receive those funds based on the matching ratio, in this case, one-to-one. Then in the last box you're going to put the total project cost, which is the sum of the NEH award and the matching funds that you'll raise. Please use only whole dollars for this. It makes it very tricky with the match to have less than whole dollars.

Tatiana Ausema 43:18

Once your application is submitted, our panelists will review the applications based on the review criteria included here, and in more detail towards the end of the NOFO on pages 33 and 34. Be sure to find the review criteria and read them closely. In your narrative, include each one of these elements

and you can even use the criteria as subject headings for your narrative for clarity. The reviewers are going to be generalists, sometimes former project directors or participants or individuals from a similar institution type. They will be knowledgeable, but a generalized audience, so try to avoid gaps or asking reviewers to make assumptions about your project expertise or staffing. I often say to applicants that you don't want to confuse reviewers because they're always going to assume the worst, so be very clear and don't assume that reviewers know your staff or your institution. If possible, ask a colleague to review your application with the criteria in mind and ask for feedback on how well your proposal responds to each one of these areas. We hope that every one of you will submit a draft for feedback from the NEH program officers prior to submitting your final application. Please note that panelists and reviewers will not know which applications submitted a draft, and so either submitting the draft or not submitting a draft will not impact the review of your application. These review criteria are the only factors considered by panelists when evaluating the quality of a project.

Tatiana Ausema 44:54

So you've assembled and submitted your application, it's gone off through review, and it's a lengthy process. I just briefly mentioned that we have our peer reviewers. After NEH staff have reviewed for eligibility and completeness, we make sure that all the required forms are there and that you're an eligible organization. And the next step, the central step, is the peer review panel. During this peer review panel, evaluators read the applications, write comments, and give each application a rating. They meet, usually virtually, and provide feedback and comments to NEH staff. NEH staff then review those comments and we make our own recommendations. Those recommendations are considered by the National Council on the Humanities, which includes 26 people who are scholars in the humanities nominated by the president and approved by the senate. The National Council then makes recommendations to the Endowment's Chair, who takes all of this into consideration and then makes the decision on which to fund. It's a long process, but it allows for rich review. But it does help explain why it takes about a year between your application is going to be submitted to when you're going to hear the results of the competition and be able to start work. After grants are announced, you can request comments from your evaluators and if the proposal is not funded, the reviewers' comments can help you think about how to revise your proposal for next time.

Tatiana Ausema 46:23

So now that we've reached the end of the webinar, what are your next steps with all of this information? The first step that you can do very quickly is spread the word. Start talking with colleagues, local organizations and your constituents about this program. Share the link to the notice of funding opportunity and the webinar when it's released and encourage them to reach out to NEH. If you or your organization is interested in applying, reach out early to a program officer with a short project description. For phone consultations with NEH staff, it's helpful to have both the project director and a development person on the call. Carefully read the materials on our website: the Notice of Funding Opportunity, the frequently asked questions, sample narratives, etc. It's dense but incredibly helpful. Pay lots of attention to file names, budget conventions, page limits, and other details. Be sure to ask questions of NEH staff. You can do that when you reach out with the program officer, you can send us emails. As you're developing your application, involve all of the project participants in the process. If you work with a grant writer, be sure they're talking to the engineers or digital specialists or fundraisers. Perhaps most importantly here, for your next steps, send a draft in for comments. Drafts are optional, but applicants have reported that the review and comments are incredibly helpful.

Ideally, the draft will include a narrative and budget justification, but we'll read whatever you have ready to send in. The draft deadline for this round is August 9th. So finally, successful or not, please request panelists comments.

Tatiana Ausema 48:14

So finally, on behalf of my colleagues in the Office of Challenge Programs, thank you so much for joining us for the webinar today. I want to especially acknowledge my colleagues Jessica Unger and John Cox, who've been instrumental in making sure the webinar runs smoothly and getting links posted and especially our intern Kat Torrago, who has also been very busy working on this program this summer. We're really looking forward to hearing from you, reading your final drafts and ultimately your applications. Please reach out with questions at any point. Our contact information is here, and I will take our last few minutes to answer any questions that you may have in the chat for this. Thank you again for coming and I'm going to stop sharing my screen so I can see the chat. Jess, are there questions in the chat that I've missed?

Jessica Unger 49:26

We did not have any questions in the chat just yet.

Tatiana Ausema 49:29

Wow, OK. It's a lot of information, so if you do have any questions, please do go ahead and put them in. Great, so the question from Nicole here is about her organization has an active Challenge grant award, would you be able to apply as part of a consortium? I think as long as you're not the primary applicant, you would be eligible to apply and even if you were the primary applicant, as long as you have all of the fundraising is complete, then you can apply. Once your fundraising is all complete, as long as you're in good standing with your other challenge grant, you may apply as a primary applicant for the Climate Smart program.

Tatiana Ausema 50:16

Chris asked about the grant to fund the plan rather than mitigation work. Yes, at this point this program funds strategic planning and developing implementation plans, but due to other government regulation pieces, we're not currently funding mitigation or implementation work in this program.

Tatiana Ausema 50:49

Other questions? Let's see. So, thinking through a consortium members, how can you best distinguish consortium members versus consultants, especially as some duties may crossover. That's a really good question. I would think about consortium members as those who are benefiting and receiving the benefits of the climate smart planning; they will leave the project with an actual climate smart plan. Whereas the consultants are the ones that are going to help you get there. So, I could see in a consortium application that you may have three humanities organizations working together and they might share a consultant to do building assessments to perhaps do blower door tests, something like that. And the consultant would provide that information, they'd be receiving funds, they'd be hired by the consortium and the consortium members would be benefiting from that expertise. I hope that was clear, but I'm happy to continue clarifying.

Tatiana Ausema 52:04

The question is if the grant is open for international applicants. You have to be a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in order to receive funds. Organizations that are incorporated in the United States but might have international campuses or buildings may potentially be eligible, but we should have a conversation about that and reach out to us directly.

Tatiana Ausema 52:39

I think I can unmute you, Valerie. Let me try unmuting you and see if that works. So Valerie you can try unmuting yourself now; you should be allowed to do that if you'd like to ask your question. But maybe not if you're not able to unmute. Please go ahead and just ask your question in the chat.

Tatiana Ausema 53:27

So, this question that just came in, if an overall proposal includes some components not directly applicable to humanities, is a consortium able to apply just for the portion that is humanities related, distinguishing from other portions of the overall project. I would definitely encourage you to reach out with these questions and we can talk through what it would look like. In short, very possibly depending on how it was structured. So, for example, if you are at a university campus and the university wants to do a climate action plan for the entire university, you couldn't come in and say, oh well, we're about 25% humanities so we're gonna ask for 25% of the overall costs related to doing a climate action plan. However, if your university is developing a climate action plan and you have a museum and a library, and perhaps an archive, and those subunits are going to work together to develop their own climate action plans in alignment with the university plan, that would be more eligible.

Tatiana Ausema 55:15

Well, if somebody is still typing, I'm happy to answer a few more questions, but I also know that we promised to wrap up by 3:00 PM Eastern and so we're within a minute or two of that. Before logging off, I just want to thank all of you again for joining and encourage you to reach out often and please don't be shy. We're very happy to set up meetings with you, have conversations, answer emails as you consider if this is a good fit for your organization. Thank you so much for joining.