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Reauthorization: State Grant Formula (1990): Report 07

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I. INTRODUCTION

The central purpose of state councils, like that of the Endowment, is to support the humanities. The biennial proposal of a state humanities council to the National Endowment is the principal planning and management tool for a state council in its support of humanities programs; it is the request and justification for funding from the Endowment; and it is the central document of record for the Endowment and its relationship with a state council.

The proposal narrative should contain four main sections: an analysis of the state and of the role of the humanities council in the state; an assessment of the work of the council during the previous two years; a statement of long-range goals with specific plans for the next two-year period; and a description and justification of the council-conducted project if one is proposed. In essence what is looked for in the review of the proposal is an account of the following:

0 what the council has accomplished in support of humanities projects in the past two years, based on clear, detailed information;

0 what has been learned from the experience of these two years;

0 plans and goals for the ensuing two years and how the plans fit into the long-range goals.

The Humanities

Under the legislation which established the National Endowment for the Humanities

the term "humanities" includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism, and theory of the arts; those aspects of the 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 the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.
It is critical that the councils return again and again in the review and evaluation of any project they support to the fundamental question: Are the humanities central to the project? Projects in the humanities need to be carefully distinguished from those that are primarily in the arts or the social sciences, or those that are essentially humanitarian in intent. Projects must avoid bias or advocacy. Whereas analysis and judgment are at the heart of work in the humanities, these judgments must be arrived at in a reasoned and disciplined manner. Scholars in the humanities should have a central role in each project and they must participate as scholars, bringing the knowledge and skills of their training, study, and teaching experience to bear upon the subject at hand. The humanities should be evident in guidelines, the catalogue of funded projects, discussion of selected project examples, and in overall discussion of plans for the ensuing two-year period.

Deadline for Application

The deadline for receipt of the biennial proposal is May 1. State councils are invited to discuss drafts of their biennial proposals with the program officer assigned to their state and with other members of the division staff in advance of the submission of the final proposal, so that staff can provide comment based on their experience with the kinds of questions frequently raised by reviewers and panelists.

The Review Process

Each state council submits a proposal in alternate years to request funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the next two years of program activity. The application is submitted by the chair of the council on its behalf. The proposal is read and evaluated by both individual reviewers and panelists selected by the NEH staff. Reviewers and panelists are selected on the basis of several factors, including their knowledge of the humanities, their familiarity with humanities programming for public audiences, and their understanding of the work of state humanities councils. Reviewers are asked to read and prepare a detailed assessment of one or two proposals in accordance with the guidelines provided to the state councils in the application instructions and to submit their report directly to the Division of State Programs. Simultaneously, the staff of the division assembles four or five panels of six to eight members each. Panelists are asked to read, prepare written comments, and offer preliminary qualitative judgments in accordance with the published guidelines on the group of applications sent to them several weeks before the panel is convened at NEH. Every application is read by several members of the division staff including the director. Each panel is chaired by the director of the division with all division staff in attendance. During the panel meeting each application is discussed in detail by the panel members in order to arrive at individual and collective recommendations; the file on a council's
previous proposal is available for the panel's consideration. The reviewers' and panelists' recommendations, together with a staff assessment of the state council's program and proposal, are summarized by the staff and forwarded to the National Council on the Humanities. By law, the Chairman of the Endowment makes the final decision on each application based on the advice of reviewers, the panels, the staff, and the National Council.

**Post Review**

At the conclusion of the review process, the program officer for a particular state summarizes the evaluations and recommendations of the reviewers, panelists, the National Council, and division staff in a post-review letter for the purpose of providing a state council with the comments and recommendations resulting from the review in order to assist the council in reaching its goals for the ensuing two-year period.

**Criteria for Review of Proposals**

In order to arrive at a judgment about the overall quality and effectiveness of the work of a state council, the Endowment asks the reviewers and panelists to evaluate the two integral and complementary aspects of a council's work:

(i) the council's funded projects and programs and

(ii) the overall operation of the council within the state.

(i) The Endowment believes that programs designed for public audiences should exhibit the following qualities. Although not all these qualities may be present in every project, they serve as benchmarks for assessing public programs in the humanities:

0 The project content is centered in one or more of the humanities disciplines cited in the Endowment's authorizing legislation.

0 Each project is focused on a topic, text, or idea which is analyzed and discussed using the methodology of the humanities.

0 The methods of the humanities -- critical thinking and interpretation -- are evident throughout the program. Scholars are actively involved in the project, drawing upon their analytical, interpretative, and pedagogical skills.

0 Scholars and the general public are involved in disciplined dialogue which benefits both.
Members of the intended audience participate in the planning and implementation of the project as a means of ensuring that topics and formats engage the interest of the participants.

(ii) In order to arrive at an assessment of the overall quality and effectiveness of the operation of the state council, the Endowment asks the reviewers and panelists to consider the following:

- the sense of mission of the council and how its vision of its role is related to its plans and programming;
- the intellectual quality of the overall program;
- the focus in funded projects on objects of study in the humanities, be they written, visual, oral, or cultural artifacts, or ideas;
- the central involvement of scholars in the humanities in all aspects of the council's program;
- the extent to which the council's program is appropriate to the state's intellectual needs, interests, and resources;
- the use of a range of disciplines and formats appropriate for the topics and the audience;
- the effort to reach all geographical areas of the state through its programming;
- the variety of audience reached, e.g., in terms of age, demographics, geography, and education level;
- the extent to which the council interacts with other educational and cultural institutions in the state;
- the ability of the council to conduct meaningful evaluation of its grantees, overall program, and organizational structure; its use of this evaluation for continuing improvement.

These criteria should be kept in mind throughout the preparation of the proposal.

General Information on the Review

In assessing the quality of the overall program of a state council, reviewers and panelists are instructed to take into consideration such factors as size, population, resources, and the general nature of the state (proportion...
of urban to rural population, for example, cultural and financial resources available, etc.). Each proposal is judged on the appropriateness of its overall program for the particular state and the progress the council is making toward intellectual leadership within the state vis-a-vis the resources available. It is expected that a council's proposal, in order to be judged "outstanding," would demonstrate impressive success in all of the above criteria defining its mission, structure, and program and would build upon past accomplishments in a logical, reasoned, and imaginative manner. To be judged "good," a council's proposal would demonstrate success in many of the above criteria and would be showing considerable progress in the other areas.

**Funding**

After review and approval of the proposal, funding is awarded for the first year of the two-year plan. (In order to receive funding for the second year, the state council submits an interim progress report assessing its progress toward the goals set forth in the biennial proposal.) Programs judged to be "outstanding" on the basis of the review of the biennial proposal are recommended for merit awards and receive an additional sum of program funds based on the funds available for this purpose. Councils whose proposals receive a rating of "good" or higher receive an additional amount of funding based on population distribution, if funds are available. Councils whose proposals receive a "satisfactory" rating receive the amount of funding established by the Congressional funding formula. Funding for programs rated as "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" may be subject to specific conditions aimed at improving particular aspects of the program. If this should occur, division staff will work closely with the council and its staff in fulfilling these conditions.

**PROPOSAL FORMAT**

**Abstract**

The abstract should be typed single-spaced on two pages (see the attached form and the model); the first is the NEH cover sheet, and the second contains space for a summary of the various sections of the proposal. On the NEH cover sheet the council should provide a statement of purpose which explicitly describes how the council envisions its role within the state. The first paragraph of the second page should summarize the analysis of the state. The second should summarize the activities of the council during the previous two years and should name and briefly (in one or two sentences) describe 3-4 projects funded during that period. The third paragraph should summarize goals and plans for the next two-year period in the areas of programming, program development, and evaluation. A final sentence should describe the council-conducted project if one is proposed. Please Note -- The primary audience for the abstract is the full membership of the National Council on the
Humanities; ordinarily, National Council members who are not on the committee for State programs do not see any other material on the work of state councils. The abstract should be carefully prepared to present the overview of the state council that most accurately represents its activities and accomplishments within the state.

PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

(1) **Analysis of the State**

Describe and analyze the characteristics of your state which are pertinent to a humanities program and make clear the role and position of the humanities council in relation to other intellectual and cultural resources in the state. Your discussion might include information about demography, socioeconomic structure, current concerns, particular history and character, and the statewide institutional framework within which the council operates. Note any recent changes in the state which have been taken into account in the council's program planning. The key question that must be addressed by the council's proposal is "What is the most appropriate role for the humanities council in a state such as yours?" The entire proposal will be read in light of this description, for a state council program is evaluated in terms of its effectiveness in using the resources of the state and in identifying and responding to the state's intellectual needs and interests.

(2) **Assessment of Past Program**

In this section of the proposal, the council should describe and analyze what it has achieved during the previous two years. Reviewers are asked to assess this section with particular care, for considerable weight in the review is placed on the past accomplishments of a council, on the council's ability to analyze and learn from the past, and on its capacity to incorporate what has been learned in the council's plans and programming for the ensuing period. Therefore, the council should be rigorous in analyzing the results of the past two years in three major areas: programming (assessing the success of various program areas including council-initiated and -conducted projects and categories of programming allowed by their guidelines), program development activities, and evaluation. Each of these categories should be analyzed by addressing the following considerations:

0 the goals established two years ago;
0 how much success was achieved in reaching these goals -- success should be supported by specific examples;
Programming: In presenting its overall program, the council should be attentive to the criteria for review of applications on page 3 -- including such factors as humanities content and intellectual quality, a range of formats, disciplines, and audiences, how scholars and participants were involved in programs, the use of texts (visual, oral, or cultural artifacts and ideas), and evaluation. (Refer to the Catalogue of Projects and give examples in discussing these aspects of the council's program.) Four to six diverse regrant projects which illustrate the work of the council should be discussed in detail, with particular emphasis on what was learned from each. An analysis of the projects which assesses weaknesses and failures and lessons learned for future improvement as well as strengths and successes will better present the thinking of the council than will one based solely on positive outcomes.

Program Development Activities: The overall plan for program development implemented during the past two years and the plans for the next 24-month grant period should be subjected to the same kind of rigorous analysis. The council should show how it attempted to encourage interest and participation throughout the state and should analyze the success of its efforts. Questions such as how the council has demonstrated intellectual leadership in the state, how it relates to other cultural and educational institutions, and how different audiences and scholarly participants were reached should be addressed. A description of efforts made by the council in the past two years to attract proposals, involve scholars, and become more visible in the state should also be included with an analysis of what has succeeded and how the substance of its work has affected the state. In this section the narrative should provide specific information, such as the number and type of workshops held, how guidelines are distributed, how many educational institutions were visited, and how often newsletters are published. This analysis of its program development activities over the past two years should provide the foundation for program development activities in the future.

Evaluation: In order to set its goals and objectives for the future, a council needs methods to evaluate its effectiveness. In discussing evaluation, the council should demonstrate what its strategies have been for assessing individual proposed and funded regrants, overall impact, the performance of staff, the quality of the council's funding guidelines and program development activities, and the council membership's own structure and accomplishments. A council needs to ask itself continually if the program is still appropriate for the state, if the intellectual quality of the overall program is substantial, if its procedures result in a council membership that is broadly representative of the state's population, if the programs funded have been solidly centered in the disciplines of the humanities, and if it is reaching various population groups and geographical areas. Evaluation procedures and outcomes should be carefully assessed.
Establishing evaluation mechanisms is one of the most difficult tasks of state councils, particularly since so much of what it does is not amenable to quantitative analysis. It should be clear to readers of the proposal why things went well or did not; the council should present its own analysis, interpretations, and conclusions about what worked in the previous two years or where improvements will be made. This self-assessment of the past two years should be the explicit basis for the future program, which forms the next section of the proposal.

(3) Future Plans

In this section the council should describe what it expects to achieve during the ensuing two-year period and how these plans fit into its long-range goals. Based on what was learned and accomplished in the past two years and on an analysis of the intellectual needs within the state, interest of its citizens, and on its humanities resources, the council should project its goals for the coming years. It may wish to outline a "five-year" plan for program activity or the choice of a particular theme or topic for the coming years, but any discussion should be based on past experience and should include answers to the "what," "why" and "how" of future goals. The description of overall long-range goals should then be followed by a discussion of proposed specific plans in the three areas of the council's work, overall programming and regrants, program development, and evaluation. For example, in discussing regrants, the council may wish to discuss specific grant lines (with reference to the attachments) and show how or why changes are being made. Many councils are interested in taking a more active role in the intellectual life of their states. They may develop activities that are focused on bringing together groups that might otherwise not collaborate and on effecting a further-reaching and longer-term impact. (The Endowment has aided councils in this effort by means of the council-conducted project, see below, and the Exemplary Awards for Projects in the Humanities, for which separate guidelines are available.) The regranting process as well enables councils to assert positive leadership in many ways. Regrants for proposals on specific themes or topics; workshops for the personnel of museums and libraries on public humanities programming; task forces on the humanities in public education; projects involving many institutions, scholars, and the public in an exploration of an important intellectual area are all examples of undertakings by state councils.

The entire section should give readers a clear, detailed idea of where the council is heading, why it is heading in that direction, and what the gauges of success will be.

(4) Council-conducted Project

A Council may elect to use up to $25,000 of its program funds to conduct a project of its own design. If a council elects this option, it should present the project in its proposal, and the project must be approved by the Endowment.
If it is not approved, funds allocated for it in the council's budget will be available to the council for regranting purposes. A detailed budget for the project should be presented by the council in addition to the total dollar figure included in the budget for the two-year period. The project should be described by the council in about five pages. Reviewers and panelists are asked for specific comments on the project. In this section of the proposal, please address the following issues and questions:

0 Rationale -- Why the project was selected and how it fits into the council's overall program. Given the current demands on staff and council members' time, will temporary staff be hired? Is it feasible to take on such a project now?

0 Humanities -- What particular disciplines of the humanities are involved in the project? Are they integral to its implementation?

0 Format -- Is the project design logical and workable? If it is a repeat or an extension of a project, provide a specific assessment of past experience.

0 Work plan -- specify the steps to be followed in implementing the project. If a conference is proposed, outline the qualifications of scholars and speakers; be as specific as possible. If the success of a conference is heavily dependent upon the participation of specific speakers, indication of their commitment is strongly advised.

0 Personnel -- Provide the names, job descriptions, and qualifications of the key personnel. If specific individuals are not in place, describe each position and indicate the qualifications of the proposed personnel and how the position will be filled.

0 Audience -- Describe the audience for the project and the extent to which it has been involved in planning the project. Indicate strategies for attracting the intended audience to participate in the project.

0 Evaluation -- Indicate both the mechanisms and criteria for project evaluation. State how this evaluation will be used to plan future council activities.

0 Budget -- Complete the attached budget sheet. Also prepare a budget narrative explaining the allocations.
Budget

A detailed financial plan, outlining the relationship between program administration and grantmaking, must be submitted. The financial plan, an integral part of the proposed program, consists of two parts: 1) an outline, with specific dollar amounts as described on the attached budget sheet, and 2) a narrative in which the major features of the budget and their relationship to the proposed program are explained for both outright and matching funds requested.

NOTE:

The budget should reflect the council's estimate of the outright funds it will expend during the 12-month period, including the gifts it intends to raise in addition to the award of definite funds. Justification for the matching request should focus on the uses to which the gifts and matching funds will be put, on the council's strategy for fundraising for the proposed grant period, and on the council's fund-raising record.

Please consult the Procedures Manual regarding the specific details of the budget format.

Attachments

Please include the following items:

1. A list of the council membership in the following format. (Note that each listing includes name, title or occupation, place of occupation, and city of residence or employment.) The list should be organized in two sections: a) Humanities/Academic and b) Public. Please put an asterisk beside the Governor's appointees.

Examples: Helen Magee
Professor of History
Century University
Miles, Mississippi 97064

John Askra
President, Chamber of Commerce
Metro Center, Suite #305
Center, Nebraska 73401

Outline council subcommittee structure, especially to make clear the involvement of council members in planning and management of council activities. Provide a map showing the communities represented by council members.
2. A list of council staff members, their titles, and a brief resume of each individual. Include a job description, listing the duties of each principal staff person.

3. A copy of the council's funding guidelines including a description of each grant line.

4. A map of the state showing the location of projects funded/completed during the last two calendar years.

5. Statistical Profile. This information will be provided by the Endowment and may be directly reproduced. Additional statistical information may be added or corrections made if necessary.

6. Catalogue of Projects. This information will be provided by the Endowment in advance of the proposal due date. It may be directly reproduced. You are encouraged to add descriptive and evaluative information and make corrections where necessary and appropriate. You may wish to consider organizing the catalogue by grantlines with an introductory overview of each. Remember that reviewers are asked to read the catalogue carefully; therefore, it is important that each project be accurately presented.

7. Copies of printed materials in the following order:
   a. Application forms (where separate from guidelines)
   b. Sample newsletters
   c. Brochures
   d. Sample products from projects
   e. Additional items as needed such as news clippings, letters of support, resource center catalogues, etc.

   Be selective. If the amount of material is overwhelming, it will not get the attention it deserves.

GENERAL FACTS ABOUT PREPARING YOUR PROPOSAL

The proposal should be written in a clear, concrete, and persuasive manner. Readers regard highly a document infused with analytical self-scrutiny and one in which assertions are substantiated with specific information and undue repetition and the use of unexplained technical terms and abbreviations are avoided.
1. The narrative section of the proposal should be double-spaced and not exceed 75 pages. Experience suggests that excessive length does not help a council present its case in the most persuasive light. If the council is proposing to conduct its own humanities project, an additional five may be used, exclusive of budget and other attachments.

2. The council's name, the date of submission, and the grant period under consideration should be placed on the front of the proposal.

3. Each proposal should be bound so that in shipping and handling no pages will be lost or misplaced. Please do not use 3-inch binders.

4. Submit 20 copies of the proposal.

5. Proposals are due at the Endowment on May 1, in alternate years.

6. All pages, including attachments if possible, should be numbered consecutively.

7. Please complete an abstract form (NEH cover sheet and continuation), and attach it to the front of the copy of the proposal.

November 1984
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