



January 2, 2024

Connecting Constituents with Federal Assistance for the Arts and Humanities

The National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities is the primary vehicle for federal support for the arts and the humanities. Established in 1965, the Foundation currently consists of three agencies: the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). IMLS is funded through the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. NEA and NEH are funded through the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. These three federal agencies provide assistance to museums, arts centers, theaters, performing arts, arts classes, arts programs, humanities programs, and more.

P.L. 117-328, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, provided FY2023 appropriations for all three agencies. In total, the act contained \$708.8 million for the agencies. IMLS appropriations for FY2023 totaled \$294.8 million for library and museum grants, NEA's appropriations for FY2023 totaled \$207.0 million, and NEH appropriations for FY2023 totaled \$207.0 million.

More information about federal funding for the three agencies is available in CRS Report R47248, *National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities: FY2023 Appropriations*.

This In Focus provides a summary of grant programs administered by IMLS, NEA, and NEH to support arts and humanities projects. Grants awarded by formula to state or regional agencies may be subawarded to other entities, including local governments, nonprofits, and individuals. In general, competitive or discretionary grants are awarded directly to eligible applicants by the federal agency.

Institute of Museum and Library Services

IMLS is the primary administrator of grants supporting the nation's state, local, and private libraries and museums.

IMLS administers the following competitive grant programs for museums, among others:

- **Museums for America** supports museums of all sizes and disciplines in project-based efforts to serve the public through exhibitions, educational or interpretive programs, digital learning resources, professional development, community debate and dialogue, audience-focused studies, and collections management, curation, care, and conservation.
- **Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services** grants support programs that sustain indigenous

heritage, culture, and knowledge and that primarily serve and represent Native Americans and Native Hawaiians.

- **National Leadership Grants for Museums** supports projects that address critical needs of the museum field and that have the potential to advance practice in the profession. This includes tangible results such as models, tools, curriculum, resources, research findings, and new services that can be widely used, adapted, scaled, or replicated.
- **Museum Grants for African American History and Culture** is designed to build the capacity of African American museums and support the growth and development of museum professionals at African American museums.
- **American Latino Museum Internship and Fellowship Initiative** is designed to provide students enrolled in institutions of higher education, including Hispanic-serving institutions, opportunities for internships and fellowships at American Latino museums.
- **Inspire! Grants for Small Museums** supports small museums serving the public through projects focused on the categories of lifelong learning, institutional capacity, and collections stewardship and access.

IMLS's grants database allows searches of past grants by year, state, city, and program.

National Endowment for the Arts

NEA is a major source of support for all arts disciplines. Typically, NEA grants are used to support nonprofit arts organizations and public arts agencies and organizations.

The **State Partnership Agreement grants program**, NEA's largest, awards grants by formula to state and regional arts agencies. Agencies apply annually for this support, which includes general funding for their priorities and designated funding for folk and traditional arts, arts education, and outreach to underserved communities. Organizations can apply to their state and regional arts agencies for grant funding through this program.

NEA's competitive grants include the following:

- **Grants for Arts Projects** is NEA's principal competitive grant program for nonprofit organizations. Grants are awarded in a number of artistic disciplines, including artist communities, arts education, dance,

design, folk and traditional arts, literary arts, local arts agencies, media arts, museums, music, musical theater, opera, theater, and visual arts. The program supports public engagement with the arts and arts education, integration of the arts with strategies promoting the health and well-being of people and communities, and improvement of overall capacity and capabilities within the arts sector.

- **Our Town** supports projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, or social outcomes. Applicants must demonstrate committed leadership from the local level and show evidence of a diverse group of local stakeholders engaged in the proposed project.
- **Challenge America** provides support for projects that extend the reach of the arts to underserved populations. The program features an abbreviated application, technical assistance for applicants, and grants of \$10,000.
- **Research Grants in the Arts** provides support for investigations of the value or impact of the arts, either as individual components of the U.S. arts ecosystem or as they interact with each other or with other domains of American life.
- **Creative Writing Fellowships** support published creative writers of prose (fiction and creative nonfiction) and poetry to enable the recipients to set aside time for writing, research travel, and general career advancement.
- **Translation Projects** provides grants to published translators to support their projects translating specific works of prose, poetry, or drama from other languages into English.

NEA's grants database allows searches of recently awarded grants by keywords, discipline, year, organization, or state.

National Endowment for the Humanities

The National Endowment for the Humanities supports grants for humanities education, research, preservation and public programs; the creation of regional humanities centers; and the development of humanities programs under the jurisdiction of the state humanities councils. Typically, NEH grants are used to support cultural institutions, such as museums, archives, libraries, colleges, universities, public television and radio, and individual scholars.

The **Federal/State Partnership program** is the largest program in NEH's budget. Program grants are awarded, by formula, to state humanities agencies to increase public awareness of, access to, and support for the humanities in the United States. Organizations can apply through their state humanities councils for grant funding through this program.

NEH has more than 40 grant programs, including the following, in which art organizations and museums may be most interested:

- **Public Humanities Projects** supports projects in three categories: exhibitions, historic places, and humanities discussions. Awards support projects that are intended to reach broad and diverse public audiences in non-classroom settings in the United States. Projects should engage with ideas that are accessible to the general public and employ appealing interpretive formats.
- **Digital Projects for the Public** supports projects that interpret and analyze humanities content in primarily digital platforms and formats, such as websites, mobile applications and tours, interactive touch screens and kiosks, games, and virtual environments.
- **Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections** supports projects in preventive conservation, managing relative humidity, temperature, light, and pollutants in collection spaces; providing protective storage enclosures and systems for collections; and safeguarding collections from theft, fire, floods, and other disasters.
- **Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions** support projects to help grantees better preserve and care for their significant humanities collections.
- **Public Impact Projects at Smaller Organizations** grants expand the scope, reach, and quality of public programs to assist in meeting a community's needs.
- **Challenge Grants** stimulate and match private donations in support of humanities institutions.

NEH's grants database allows searches of recently awarded grants by keywords, type of organization, field, and state.

Additional Resources

CRS has a number of products related to grants work, many of which are listed on the Grants and Federal Assistance page of the CRS website.

The Assistance Listings page on SAM.gov is the primary source of information on federal assistance programs. The listings include information on eligibility, how to apply, and matching requirements. Actual funding of specific grant programs depends on annual congressional budget appropriations.

Grants.gov provides grant seekers with information on competitive federal grant opportunities and how to apply for them.

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IF12561

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