AHRC – NEH Joint Call: New Directions for Digital Scholarship in Cultural Institutions

Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ is intended to support the joint NEH-AHRC programme New Directions for Digital Scholarship in Cultural Institutions. It should be read in conjunction with AHRC'S Call Guidance document and NEH’s Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) document. Where the information provided below or in the Call Guidance or NOFO raises further questions, applicants should contact AHRC or NEH. Please direct your question to your host agency, for example if you are at a UK-based institution, please contact AHRC. All queries and questions will be shared with both agencies to ensure transparency and where necessary develop a shared response.

1. **Is having received an AHRC Partnership Development Grant a prerequisite for applying to this funding opportunity?**
   No, you need not have received an AHRC Partnership Development Grant or networking award before applying. Applicants who have received funding through previous AHRC calls delivered through the wider set of activities are required to demonstrate how the proposed project is clearly distinct from and/or builds upon the previous project(s).

2. **Should we apply for a Level I or Level II project?**
   It depends on the maturity of your project and the scale of activity proposed. AHRC applicants are advised to consider the size and scope of their project in relation to the two funding levels, and should review Section II for examples of projects that are appropriate. Section II C provides examples of the outputs or products for each funding level. NEH applicants are advised to review the Funding levels described in section A1 of the NOFO for examples of the types of projects that are appropriate for the two funding levels, as well as examples of the outputs or products for each funding level.

3. **Is our organisation eligible for this funding opportunity?**
   Your organisation is eligible if it meets the eligibility requirements of the relevant funder.
For UK-based applicants, all Higher Education Institutions that receive grant funding from one of the UK higher education funding bodies are eligible to receive funds for this call. Independent Research Organisations (IRO) and Research Council Institutes are also eligible to act as lead organisation. Prospective applicants who are at a cultural institution or a research council institute but are unsure if they are eligible should consult [UKRIs list of eligible institutions](#) and the list of [eligible Research Council Institutes](#). If your organisation is not on that list, you are not eligible to apply, however you are eligible to act as a project partner for a lead organisation based in either country. Please note IROs and Research Council Institutes can also act as project partners.

US-based applicants should refer to section C. Eligibility of the NOFO, which states that the following are eligible: US nonprofit organisations with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, accredited public and 501(c)(3) institutions of higher education, state and local governmental agencies, and federally recognised Native American tribal governments.

Applications must be submitted by teams composed of at least one organisation from the US and one from the UK, in which each country is represented by at least one cultural institution.

4. **I am employed by or affiliated with a university in the US and my collaborator is employed by or affiliated with a university in the UK. May we apply to this funding opportunity?**

   Yes, but you must satisfy the requirement of involving a minimum of one cultural institution in both countries. Therefore, it is possible for a university in the US and a university in the UK to lead a project where at least one cultural institution in the UK and one in the US are involved as project partners. By contrast, a proposal would not be eligible if, for example, there was only one cultural institution involved, or multiple cultural institutions but in one country only.

   As an example, a project that involves one US and one UK cultural institution is eligible (two institutions total), but a project with one US institution of higher education and one UK cultural institution without any cultural institutions would not be eligible.

5. **What is meant by cultural institution?**

   For the purpose of this funding opportunity, the term "cultural institution" is conceived broadly and defined as any organisation that collects, organises, preserves, and makes accessible cultural heritage materials to both the academic research community as well as the public (including museums, libraries, galleries, archives, and historical societies). Some cultural institutions are affiliated with or housed within universities or other institutions of higher education; such institutions are considered to satisfy the status of “cultural institution” as applied to this competition. If you are concerned about the eligibility of a particular institution, you are advised to consult with the relevant funder.
6. **Must the cultural institution be the lead organisation? Are there any restrictions on funding?**

No. The project can be led by any eligible institution as set-out in 3) above. However, given the focus of the funding opportunity, cultural institutions should be central to the research and wider activities delivered through the project. As stated above, proposals must include the involvement of at least one cultural institution in each country as a project partner. Projects in which the cultural institutions are merely providing access to collections or resources are not appropriate for this funding opportunity.

7. **Are there any restrictions on funding?**

See Section D6 of the NOFO for a full list of funding restrictions.

8. **We are interested in partnering with a university or cultural institution in another country. Is this an option?**

Yes, you may partner with individuals or organisations outside the US or UK as long as you adhere to the policies of the relevant funder and the primary focus on enhanced UK-US collaboration is maintained. The addition of partners from third countries should demonstrably add value to the proposed activity.

US-based applicants will want to pay special attention to section C3. Other Eligibility Information of the NOFO.

UK-based applicants should refer to AHRC’s international co-investigator policy. Costs for international Co-Investigators from other countries can be included in accordance with this policy where it can be demonstrated that they will add value to the project. Because US based partners are eligible for NEH funding, AHRC would not expect this policy to apply to US partners for this call unless an exceptional case can be made.

9. **May I be involved in more than one application submitted to this funding opportunity?**

Yes, you may be involved in more than one application as long as the projects are separate and distinct and you can demonstrate that you will be able to contribute to the projects on the basis set-out in the application should more than one be successful. However, you can only be named as Principal Investigator (for AHRC) or Project Director or co-director (for NEH) on one application; this applies to both level I and level II projects. AHRC and NEH prohibit applications that include overlapping project costs (see section III C Other Eligibility Information of the AHRC call, and section C3. Other Eligibility Information of the NOFO).

10. **Do we need to submit applications both to NEH and AHRC?**

Yes, the US-based applicants will submit one application to NEH using Grants.gov and the UK-based applicants to AHRC using Je-S in accordance with the requirements set-out in the NEH NOFO / AHRC call. The Narrative / Case for Support should be identical, as should the other attachments, with the exception of the respective budgets and budget justifications. US-based applicants (submitting to NEH) will prepare a Research and Related Budget and budget
justification to reflect all US costs as part of the application; they will then include a copy of the UK budget and Justification of Resources as an attachment to the application. UK-based applicants (submitting to AHRC) will prepare a budget and Justification of Resources to reflect all UK costs as part of the application; they will then include a copy of the Research and Related Budget and budget justification submitted to NEH as an attachment to the application. Please refer to section D. Application and Submission Information of the NOFO.

11. From whom should we request letters to accompany my application?
Include letters from any US and UK project partners. A project partner is defined here as an organisation that is making a significant and specific contribution (either in cash or in kind) to the project. The letter(s) should clearly identify the contribution each partner is making to the project.

12. Will NEH and AHRC have separate review processes?
No, AHRC and NEH will have a single, joint review process. All eligible and complete applications will be reviewed by a review panel with expert reviewers nominated by both AHRC and NEH staff. Applications that are recommended for funding will then be subject to final approval by the leadership of both funders, the AHRC Executive Group and the NEH Chairman. See section E2. Application Review Information of the NOFO.

13. Is there a limit to how many project partners can be on the application?
There is no limit to how many project partners can be included on an application. The inclusion of project partners should be clearly justified and commensurate with the aims and focus of the application as well as the overarching aims of the call. Where multiple partners are involved, applicants should describe the governance structures that will achieve an appropriate balance of responsibilities across all participating bodies.

14. Will the ongoing issue of Coronavirus/COVID 19 have an impact on the timetable for review or mean a delay in projects starting?
Applicants are advised to consult the NEH and UKRI websites on a regular basis to ensure they are up to date on how each funder is responding to this issue.

15. How should applicants account for the uncertainty surrounding the impact of the current COVID-19 situation in their proposals, and will this have an effect on how applications are assessed?
AHRC and NEH recognise that the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on international research collaboration are difficult to predict and unlikely to be fully resolved at the point of application. For example, the point at which restrictions on travel, physical meetings and access to collections and archives might be relaxed remains unclear. Where applicable, applicants should take account of the pandemic in planning their research timetable, but are encouraged to proceed with the methodologies and activities that are most suited to the delivery of the best possible research within the respective field. However, where this involves activity that would currently not be possible due to COVID-19, and which might continue to be impacted in the future, applicants should demonstrate how they will embed flexibility into their plans. For
example, if there are plans to use physical collections, applicants should demonstrate how they will adapt their timelines and/or methods if access remains impossible. Similarly, if a workshop or conference is planned, applicants should consider how alternative options, such as digital conferencing, might be used if physical meetings are not viable. AHRC and NEH will work together to explore options to facilitate flexibility for project teams where required and within the rules and capacity of the agencies. AHRC and NEH will also brief the review panel to ensure that any issues raised relating to the impact of COVID-19 during the review process are considered in a consistent, reasonable and equitable manner.

16. **Will there be a deadline extension if the current COVID-19 situation affects the capacity of colleagues in cultural institutions to support the application process?**

Whilst AHRC and NEH recognise the impacts of COVID-19 has had on cultural institutions and HEIs, there are currently no plans to extend the deadline beyond 18th August. However both agencies are in close cooperation with each other and are maintaining regular communications to understand the impacts on the community and the evolving picture – we are therefore planning accordingly and for all eventualities.

Where the impact of COVID-19 is affecting the capacity of cultural institutions to meet all the requirements of the application process, applicants are encouraged to contact the AHRC and/or NEH to explore options. For example, if current circumstances make it difficult to include formal letters of support from cultural institutions named as project partners, it might be possible to submit these subsequently if a reason for doing so can be provided and the role of the partner in question is otherwise clearly set-out in the application.