

OVERVIEW

An Action Grant can help you implement new projects developed through previous Incubation Grants or other planning processes. Or they can support the continuation or expansion of longstanding programs. We encourage you to set a bold vision for your programming and experiment with new topics and program designs.

Grant Amount: \$2,000-20,000

Project Period: Up to 18 months

Deadlines

Letter of Intent: March 1-31, 2022

Application Deadline: April 21, 2022

Award Notification: By June 30, 2022

Projects Begin: Within 3 months of award

<https://njhumanities.org/grants/action-grants/>

WHO CAN APPLY?

To be eligible for a New Jersey Council for the Humanities grant, you must apply on behalf of a New Jersey-based nonprofit organization or government entity, such as a public library, museum, historical society, academic institution, religious group, or community organization. Organizations that have a mission outside of the public humanities, such as arts and social service organizations, are eligible to apply if the funding would support public humanities work. We do not award grants to for-profit organizations or to individuals.

Applicant organizations must have either a federal EIN or NJ tax-exempt registration number. All applicants must have at least one year of verifiable public operation prior to submitting their proposal.

Please note that organizations that have an open Incubation or Action grant project with a project end date after the LOI deadline will not be eligible to apply in the current round.

Academic Institutions

For all NJCH grants, a department, institute, or division of an academic institution counts as an organization. However, NJCH may limit the number of grants a single academic institution receives to ensure that available funding is spread equitably across the state. Academic institutions will need to demonstrate meaningful public engagement and partnerships beyond the organization to have a competitive proposal.

Unique Entity ID

Eligible organizations will need to have a verifiable Unique Entity ID (UEI) from the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) by the application deadline. The UEI is currently a [DUNS number](#), but on April 4, 2022 will transition to a UEI managed through SAM.gov; to learn more please visit [SAM.gov](#).

Insurance

Any organization that receives a grant from NJCH will be required to have appropriate general liability coverage for their project and to list the Council as an additional insured. We recommend that you check with your insurance carrier to determine what costs may be incurred from these insurance requirements and incorporate those costs into your grant budget.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

If you know what to do and have a plan to launch your project, an Action Grant is for you.

An Action Grant proposal will be able to clearly articulate a program's objectives, plan, and timeline. There will be very few questions you have left to answer before you're ready to get the show on the road – you know what and who you need to make your project successful and are able to clearly identify the component parts of your project through your grant application and budget.

Example Action Grant Projects

- Fieldwork for an oral history project
- Hosting a series of public humanities programming, such as a facilitated reading and discussion program
- Creation of humanities-based public exhibitions and tours, both in-person and virtual
- Supporting associated humanities-based public programming for an exhibition
- Production of a digital humanities project or other humanities-based multi-media resources.

The list above is not exhaustive, and Action Grants can take many shapes, but the common thread is that they are primarily about “doing.” Even very new projects can be appropriate for Action Grants if the planning and development work has been completed and the pilot is ready to go. Projects that still have a

lot of unanswered questions will not be competitive Action Grant proposals, no matter how great the idea is.

Still not sure if this grant is right for your project? NJCH staff is available to help you determine the appropriate type of funding for your proposed project.

What We Don't Fund

- Humanitarian aid and social services
- Self-help, wellness, health, and fitness programs
- Financial literacy
- Political and social advocacy
- Projects that do not engage with humanities disciplines or practices

About the Public Humanities

We often encounter the humanities as part of our formal education. They include familiar disciplines such as history, literature, and philosophy, as well as those less common (jurisprudence, we're thinking of you!). The humanities also encompass art history, theory, and criticism, but not the creation, display, or performance of art. The public humanities take these subjects out of the classroom and makes them accessible to wide and diverse audiences through a variety of methods – exhibitions and installations, discussion programs, oral history projects, and interpretive tours – that enable audiences to engage in critical reflection on human histories, cultures, values, and beliefs.

Humanities Scholar

All Action Grant projects are required to have a humanities scholar as part of the project team, though it is possible that a significant portion of their input took place during the planning and development process.

Humanities scholars come from a variety of backgrounds:

- Academic humanists – university faculty, graduate students, or researchers who have an advanced degree in a humanities field and are employed by an institution of higher learning.
- Public humanists – those who may have an advanced degree in a humanities field but are not affiliated with a college or university. They often work as practitioners in non-profit organizations like museums, libraries, or cultural centers, or they may work independently.
- Humanities scholars from nontraditional backgrounds – they may or may not possess an advanced degree but are defined by their own communities as keepers of knowledge and cultural resources.

The scholar can serve in a variety of roles, including as an advisor, presenter, researcher, writer, trainer, and/or convenor. They may be internal staff, or someone brought in from outside, depending on the needs of your organization, but they should have deep knowledge of a particular subject or practice. If you need help identifying a humanities scholar, please contact us at grants@njhumanities.org.

Audience

A strong Action Grant project will have been developed alongside your intended audience through a collaborative process that considered the audience's needs and interests. Applicants will need to be able to articulate how their project ideas serve their audience(s) and provide concrete examples of how the planning and development process or prior experience led to that conclusion.

We find that the most meaningful projects are designed for a specific audience, and we are particularly interested in projects that serve traditionally under-resourced and marginalized populations. While these groups differ in each community, we do know that some groups often lack representation in the humanities, including:

- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
- Young people, especially ages 18-35
- LGBTQ+ people
- People who live far away from cultural centers like libraries and museums
- People with physical disabilities, such as wheelchair users or the blind
- People whose first (or only) language is not English
- Those who are unable to get to programs easily, like nursing home residents, hospital patients, or prisoners

The most competitive proposals will articulate why this audience is particularly important to your organization and how you plan to engage them in this project.

Projects should be directed towards and designed for a primarily NJ-based audience, but we understand that virtual and hybrid programming may attract out-of-state and international attendees. You may charge admission to an event funded with a New Jersey Council for the Humanities grant, but the admission should be nominal.

Prospective grantees will need to consider how the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will potentially impact planned in-person gatherings. Throughout the lifecycle of the grant, please follow state and local guidance and regulations.

USE OF FUNDS

All project costs must be reasonable, necessary to accomplish project objectives, and incurred during the grant period. The budget submitted must include all project costs, not only those charged to NJCH grant funds, but also those that will be supported by the applicant organization or by other funding sources (matching funds – more information below). Values assigned should be reasonable in relation to rates paid for similar work, current market prices, or fair rental charges.

NJCH re-grants federal funds that it receives from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Please consult your organization's accountant or auditor to determine if you are subject to certain governmental audit requirements as a result of your receipt of these federal funds. The organization should follow standard accounting procedures for all grant awards. Since grants may be subject to NJCH and NEH audit, grant recipients must maintain financial records for at least three years following submission of the final report.

INELIGIBLE COSTS

- General operating support.
- Work outside of the humanities, including the creation or performance of art; creative writing, autobiographies, memoirs, and creative nonfiction; and empirically based social science research or policy studies.
- Scholarly programs directed to a limited audience or individual scholar research.
- Direct social action or political advocacy, including the advocacy of a particular program of social or political action, support of specific public policies or legislation, and lobbying.
- Re-grants, prizes, awards, and projects that provide academic credit, scholarships, fellowships, or regular course offerings.
- The purchase of land or facilities, capital projects, construction, or renovation.
- Acquisitions of major equipment over \$5,000 in value.
- Alcohol and entertainment.
- Fundraising activities, contributions to an endowment, and the repayment of loans or debts.
- Overlapping project costs with any other pending or approved application for federal funding, including an open or pending NJCH Incubation or Action Grant.
- Costs incurred prior to or after the grant period.
- Unallowable expenses as defined in [2 CFR 200 Subpart E – Cost principles](#).

GRANT PERIOD

The period of time during which your grant funds and matching costs will be accrued is called the grant period. All grant periods must begin within three months of award and Action Grant projects may last up to 18 months. All grant funds must be incurred during the grant period; no costs incurred prior to the start or after the grant closes may be applied to the grant.

MATCHING FUNDS REQUIREMENT

Matching funds are the portion of the project costs not covered by the NJCH grant. The Council requires the applicant to provide a minimum 100% match for the funds requested from NJCH. Matching funds may come from the applicant organization and/or third-party sources (individuals, foundations, corporations, etc.) other than the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Matching funds may come from any combination of in-kind contributions (donated goods or services), monetary contributions, or from the applicant's operating budget. Matching funds may be applied to any project expense category.

INDIRECT COSTS

Also known as "administrative costs," "overhead," and "general operating costs," indirect costs are incurred by an organization through the execution of its day-to-day activities but cannot be attached to a specific activity. They are the expenses that keep the lights on, give everyone a space to work and the equipment they need, pay for insurance, and manage financial transactions. Indirect cost equations will vary depending on the organization; NJCH staff can help you determine an appropriate amount for your project.

For organizations that have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with the federal government, the grant recipient may use the negotiated indirect cost rate established by NICRA or may elect to charge the *de minimis* rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs as allowed per the Uniform Guidance. Organizations using a negotiated indirect cost rate must provide a copy of their current NICRA form to NJCH.

APPLICATION AND PROCESS

NJCH's online grant application and management system incorporates all parts of the grant process from the initial Letter of Intent, final application submission, and post-award management.

1. REVIEW THE GUIDELINES AND DEADLINES

Please read through the entire Grants section of our website to ensure that you are eligible to apply for a grant and to determine which type of grant best suits your project. The grant guidelines have information

about when all application materials are due and when your project can begin, as well as details about upcoming grant workshops and other learning opportunities.

2. ACCESS ONLINE APPLICATION SYSTEM

Organizations that have not applied for any NJCH funding opportunities since September 2020 will need to create an account in our online grant application system. Returning applicants will be able to access the system using their account credentials.

3. SELECT THE CORRECT APPLICATION

All open programs to which you may apply will be listed in the online application system. Be sure to select the correct one as applications differ slightly for each program.

4. SUBMIT THE LOI (LETTER OF INTENT)

Once you've decided which grant to apply for, you'll need to submit an LOI using our online grant system. The LOI is an online form (not a letter) that requests some basic information about your organization, a short description of your proposed project, and an estimated grant request. The LOI is not competitive and just provides a quick way for NJCH staff to determine that your organization is eligible to apply for a grant and that your project is appropriate for NJCH funding.

Please note that in each round the LOI is only available during the LOI period. We do not require organizations to schedule a call prior to submitting the LOI.

5. START YOUR APPLICATION

If your organization and project meet the basic eligibility requirements, you will be invited to submit a full application. Once your LOI is approved, an invitation will be sent via email and the full application will be accessible in the grant system.

Please note that by default the proposal will only be accessible to the primary applicant, even if other members in your organization have an account in our system. If you need other project team members to have access to the proposal, we recommend using the Collaborator feature in our grant system. To learn more [click here](#).

6. SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

Final applications must be submitted through our online system by the deadline listed in the grant guidelines. Materials submitted late will not be considered. Once your final application is submitted, you will not be able to make any changes. If you submit in error, please contact us to reset your application.

7. EVALUATION

Proposal review and assessment is conducted by NJCH's Grants Committee, which is comprised of humanities professionals who work as scholars and practitioners throughout the state of New Jersey at libraries, museums, historical societies, arts organizations, or educational institutions. The Grants Committee makes the final funding decisions for NJCH grants with the assistance of NJCH staff.

8. NOTIFICATION

Applicants will be notified of our decision via email by the award notification date listed in the grant guidelines. If awarded, the grant agreement and required reports will be accessible in our online grant application and management system at the time of notification. If you interested in learning more about what to expect if you are awarded an NJCH grant, please visit our For Grantees page.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each Action grant proposal is evaluated on the following measures:

Project Plan and Outcomes

The project identifies clear outcomes, is supported by a well-conceived plan, and is ready to be implemented during the grant period. The applicant identifies indicators that would help them recognize the impact this project has on their intended audience and/or the organization.

Humanities Content and Scholar

The project deeply engages with the humanities and relies on informed resources to pursue complex questions and ideas. It creates opportunities for learning and pushes participants towards broader perspectives and rather than presenting information to passive participants there are opportunities for dialogue or response. The expertise and experience of the humanities scholar is well-suited to the project.

Audience and Outreach

The project is designed to serve a specific audience and engages that audience in its conception and execution. The applicant seeks to engage underrepresented or underserved audiences and finds ways to bring together people of different backgrounds and experiences. The organization is well-suited to do this work with the target audience and has a clear strategy for connecting with the target audience (and often the broader community as well) to encourage participation in the proposed work.

Budget and Capacity

Budget and budget description articulate reasonable costs that reflect the project goals and deliverables. The budget shows thoughtful consideration of what will be needed to execute the project. The organization is capable of doing the work proposed and the project is connected to their mission and objectives. The organization has assembled an appropriate team to execute the project.

CONNECT WITH NJCH STAFF

Workshops

Each year, NJCH offers a variety of workshops to current and potential grantees and program partners. Offerings are updated regularly as new opportunities become available.

- Applying for an NJCH Grant: Thursday, February 24, 2022, 1-2pm
- Applying for an NJCH Grant: Monday, March 14, 2022, 11am-12pm
- Creating an Outstanding Proposal: Thursday, April 7, 1-2:30pm

Open Office Hours

NJCH will be hosting open office hours on Zoom every Thursday 11am-12pm, starting February 17 and ending April 14, 2022. Office hours give prospective applicants the chance to ask questions about topics such as submitting an LOI, our grant guidelines, application components, and/or their prospective proposals in an informal environment. You are welcome to join for as long or as little as needed.

NJCH also offers organizations the ability to schedule one-on-one meetings with program staff. Confirmation of the meeting will be dependent upon NJCH staff availability, and we will prioritize organizations that have less access to grant-seeking expertise and resources.

Pre-LOI Meeting

Organizations will have the option to request a fifteen-minute meeting with NJCH Program Staff prior to submitting their LOI. We encourage prospective applicants to join our workshops and open office hours if they need answers to high-level questions about project and organization eligibility, but we recognize there are instances where more individualized guidance is helpful. To request a meeting prior to submitting your LOI please [click here](#).

Grant Consultation

Invited applicants will be able to schedule a grant consultation with NJCH program staff prior to the application deadline. The consultation provides an opportunity for NJCH staff to learn more about your work and for you to receive more individual guidance on your proposal. Invited applicants may submit one draft for review prior to your consultation and NJCH staff will provide feedback during the grant

consultation. Grant consultations take place by video conference and typically last about 30 minutes. Instructions to set up a consultation will be in your LOI acceptance notification email.

FAQ

I'm interested in talking with a NJCH program officer. Who do I contact?

The best way to contact our program officers is by email at grants@njhumanities.org. Because of the volume of applicants, we strongly encourage you to read all the grant guidelines and/or attend one of the grant webinars or open office hours before reaching out to NJCH staff directly.

I have an open grant with NJCH. Can I still apply for a grant?

It depends. Organizations that have an open Incubation or Action grant project with a project end date after the LOI deadline will not be eligible to apply in the current round. Organizations that have an open COVID-19 Response Grant will be eligible to apply in the upcoming round, assuming they meet the other eligibility requirements.

Can I apply for both an Action and Incubation grant (or more than one of the same grant type)?

No. Organizations can only apply for one grant per funding cycle.

I'm not sure if I should apply for an Incubation or Action grant. What should I do?

You will need to choose which grant type best suits your project based on what stage it is in.

Incubation Grants support the planning and development of public humanities projects, so if you have significant questions you need to address prior to implementation, then you should apply for this grant type. Action Grants support the implementation of public humanities programs, so if you have clear idea of what you want to do, the key players, and a clear timeline than you should apply for this grant type.

I applied for the wrong grant type. Can I switch applications?

Yes. If you determine that your project would be more suited to another grant type, organizations can switch during the application period. Please note that the applications are not interchangeable, so you will need to submit a new LOI prior to working on the full proposal. A program officer can walk you through the process.

Is there a PDF available of the grant guidelines?

Yes. PDF copies of our guidelines are available on our [Resources](#) page.

Is there a PDF available of the grant applications?

Yes. PDF copies of our applications are available on our [Resources](#) page.

Can I save a draft of my grant application and come back to it?

Yes. NJCH uses a grant application and management system called Foundant that will allow you to return to your draft application as often as you wish prior to submitting the final proposal. You will also use this system to manage your award and reporting if you receive funding.

Below the narrative questions in the LOI and application it says there are X out of Y characters remaining. Do I need to complete the question with all the available characters?

No. You do not need to use all the characters available to answer the narrative questions. The focus should be on clearly communicating your ideas rather than on filling the allotted space. The maximum character count provided is higher than applicant responses from previous rounds, so there should be more than enough space provided to effectively answer these questions.

Where do I access your grant application and management system?

[Click here](#) to access our grant application and management system, Foundant. Note: you will only be able to access an application when that application's cycle is open.

How can other people work on the application and other forms in Foundant?

By default, the application and other forms will only be accessible to the primary applicant, even if other members of your team have an active account. We recommend using the Collaborator feature if you need to give other project team members access, but please note that permission cannot be assigned to the full request but rather will need to be assigned per form. To learn more [click here](#).

My proposal was declined! What can I do to make my next one more competitive?

There are a variety of factors that may contribute to a grant proposal not being funded. The most common reasons include a lack of significant humanities content, public focus, and/or clarity on what the applicant is specifically going to do (especially with Action Grants). However, the top reason proposals are not funded is because we run out of funding before we run out of good proposals to fund. NJCH program officers can provide feedback specific to your proposal if it is not funded. Organizations are welcome to consider that feedback and reapply in a later round. Instructions for how to request feedback will be included in your decline notification.

Does NJCH award partial funding?

NJCH prefers to fund projects in full and very rarely funds any project grant proposal at less than 80% of request. However, there are instances when we award partial funding, depending on the total number of proposals funded in each round, how each proposal is scored, and a number of other factors. We recognize that a proposal that is not fully funded will need to be adjusted in terms of scope and deliverables, so NJCH staff will work with you to adjust your budget and project plan in the event that your proposal is not funded in full.

Updated 2/1/2022. As new or additional information becomes available, questions and answers may be added to the FAQ. Check back regularly for updates.