

OVERVIEW

An Incubation Grant encourages you to set out a bold vision and see where it takes you. It might help you forge a new partnership or deepen an existing one, research a new topic or widen perspective on a current topic, talk to community stakeholders, or learn more about your audience. You might be planning a new program or taking a fresh approach to an existing one.

Grant Amount: \$3,000-15,000

Project Period: Up to 12 months

Deadlines

ROUND 1

LOI Period: September 1-30, 2023*

Draft Review Deadline (Optional): October 11, 2023

Application Deadline: October 17, 2023

Award Notification: By December 31, 2023

Projects Begin: Between January and March 2024

ROUND 2

LOI Period: March 1-31, 2024*

Draft Review Deadline (Optional): April 10, 2024

Application Deadline: April 16, 2024

Award Notification: By June 30, 2024

Projects Begin: Between July and September 2024

*Please note that LOIs are approved on a rolling basis throughout the LOI period. We recommend submitting early!

<https://njhumanities.org/grants/incubation-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 a federal EIN. 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. Organizations involved in another NJCH program (such as Community History, Humanities Lab, or Informed NJ) should consult the program director prior to applying for a grant to determine eligibility.

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 school community 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 (UEI)

Eligible organizations will need to have a verifiable UEI from the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) by the application deadline. To learn more please visit [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).

Please note that the UEI replaces the DUNS number that was previously used as the identifier for federal funding opportunities. Since NJCH re-grants federal funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) organizations are required to have a verifiable UEI and no active exclusions in SAM.gov to receive funding. While organizations are required to have a UEI, completing the full SAM.gov registration process is not a requirement.

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

Incubation Grants support the planning and development of public humanities programs for audiences in New Jersey.

A meaningful question is the start of a great Incubation Grant proposal. We encourage you to set out a bold vision and see where it takes you. It might help you forge a new partnership or deepen an existing one, research a new topic or widen perspective on a current topic, talk to community stakeholders, or learn more about your audience. Whether you are planning a new endeavor or re-imagining an existing program, these grants support the thoughtful preparation of a program prior to implementation.

We are most interested in hearing about the need you wish to address, your goals as you start this process, and how you plan to proceed. Since these grants support projects in development, we understand that preliminary ideas will change and evolve – a successful Incubation Grant could even help you realize that your proposed program is a bad idea and cannot move forward as originally envisioned! Articulating a plan for how you will pursue your goals is critical for a competitive Incubation Grant proposal.

Example Incubation Grant Projects

- Creation of a historic site reinterpretation plan.
- Development of community archival or oral history project.
- Audience outreach and assessment for new or extant humanities-based programming.
- Humanities-based research as a precursor to the development of an artistic work.
- Planning and development of public humanities programming, such as a facilitated discussion program.
- Research and design for humanities-based exhibitions.

The list above is not exhaustive, and Incubation Grants can take many shapes, but the common thread is that they are intrinsically about discovery. While pilot programs can fit under the Incubation umbrella, they must include a substantial planning or development component to be competitive in this type of grant. Projects that are mostly about “doing” will not be competitive Incubation Grant proposals, no matter how great the idea is.

Still not sure if this grant is right for your project? NJCH staff are 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 some 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 make them accessible to wide and diverse audiences through a variety of methods – exhibitions and installations, discussion programs, oral history projects, tours, etc. – that enable audiences to engage in critical reflection on human histories, cultures, values, and beliefs.

Project Team

The project team are the individuals who bring the humanities-based subject matter and practice expertise needed to create rich and nuanced public humanities work. There is not a single prescription for a strong project team, but rather it is important to consider how the knowledge, skills, and lived experience of your team members complement each other as a whole. Humanities expertise can be found in individuals 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 – individuals who likely 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 experts from nontraditional backgrounds – individuals who may or may not possess an advanced degree but are defined by their own communities as keepers of knowledge and cultural resources.

Project team members can serve in a variety of roles, including as an advisor, presenter, researcher, writer, trainer, and/or convenor. Project team members can be both internal staff and individuals brought in from outside, depending on the needs of your organization and project, but they should all have deep knowledge of a particular subject or practice. Part of the Incubation Grant process can be identifying and assembling the humanities experts needed for your project team.

Competitive grant applications will include a strong project team that reflects subject-matter expertise, significant experience in humanities-based work practices, and representation from the intended audience in the development of the project. Incubation Grant applicants who are still developing their project team should articulate what types of skills or expertise they are still looking for at the point of application and any progress they have made in securing the needed individual(s).

If you need help identifying a humanities expert, please contact us at grants@njhumanities.org.

Audience

A strong Incubation Grant project will develop programming with an intended audience through a collaborative process that considers the audience's needs and interests. This process can help you determine whether your project ideas will truly serve your intended audience or to reevaluate your existing programs to better serve a new audience.

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. During the Incubation process you may have no or very little traditional public programming (e.g., lectures, exhibitions, discussion programs) since planning and development usually focuses inward. However, getting the input of your intended audience on the development of your project (e.g., through focus groups, surveys, and other methods of stakeholder outreach) is an invaluable way to put your audience's needs at the center of your planning process and to generate buy-in for the project from its inception.

USE OF FUNDS

All project costs must be reasonable, necessary to accomplish project objectives, and incurred during the grant period.

Project costs will include expenses for project personnel (paid staff, volunteers, consultants, and presenters), travel and lodging, materials and supplies, and services. The budget submitted must include all project costs, not only those charged to NJCH grant funds, but also those that will provide the required match through organizational funds or by other funding sources (more information about matching funds 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 Incubation Grant projects may last up to 12 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, including to matching funds.

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 category of expense other than Indirect Costs.

INDIRECT COSTS

Applicants can request a percentage of their project expenses as indirect costs. Also known as "administrative costs" or "overhead", indirect costs are incurred by your organization through the execution of day-to-day work but cannot be attached to a specific activity.

- Your organization can request up to 10 percent of the project expenses in your Grant Request as indirect costs.
- The calculation of indirect costs should **not** include funds in the Cash or In-kind Match.
- Indirect costs may **only** be included in the Grant Request and **cannot** be included in the Cash or In-kind Match.
- Indirect costs do **not** need to be itemized and should **not** include any direct project expenses.

If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with the federal government you may instead use the rate established by NICRA. Be sure to use the rate that is appropriate for the type of project work supported by the grant. Organizations using a negotiated indirect cost rate must provide a copy of their current NICRA form to NJCH. Organizations that have a NICRA may include unrecovered indirect costs in their match.

Please note that having a NICRA form is **not** a requirement to apply and is something that will typically only apply to organizations that regularly apply for federal grants, such as colleges and universities.

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, [Foundant](#). 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 separate 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 organizations must begin their applications by submitting the LOI form during the LOI period. No application can be started once that period has passed, even if it is prior to the application deadline. LOIs are accepted and approved on a rolling basis throughout the LOI period. Notification of whether your organization is invited to submit a full application will be sent within 5 business days (often sooner) of your LOI submission. We do not require organizations to schedule a call prior to submitting an LOI. We do recommend that you submit your LOI as early as possible within the LOI period.

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 A DRAFT FOR REVIEW (OPTIONAL)

Invited applicants may submit one draft for review by the draft deadline. NJCH staff will typically provide written feedback on your draft proposal, but it can be incorporated into scheduled meetings. Our goal is to keep the turnaround time as short as possible, but it will be dependent upon demand, and we recommend that you submit your draft before the draft deadline.

We do not require complete applications for draft review. If you are unable to complete the full application by the draft review deadline, a completed budget and partial narrative is often more useful than a complete narrative and no budget.

Draft applications should be sent to grants@njhumanities.org as Word, Excel, and/or PDF documents. An easy way to create a PDF of your draft application is to click the “Application Packet” button in the application page of our online grant management system.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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

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. Each grant application is evaluated by a minimum of three peer reviewers from the committee. Scores are averaged between all reviewers, who then meet along with NJCH program staff to discuss proposed projects and finalize award recommendations. When all applications have been reviewed, NJCH staff creates a ranked list of proposed projects from which final award decisions are made by the Grants Committee.

Each Incubation grant proposal is evaluated on the following criteria:

Project Plan and Outcomes

The project is supported by a plan and the proposal identifies clear goals and deliverables that will help the organization take the next steps in the project's development. The applicant indicates willingness to adjust based on discovery during this incubation process and articulates what they wish to assess and connects that effort to the project's goals and intentions.

Humanities Content and Project Team

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. The expertise and experience of the project team is well-suited to the project or, if they are not yet identified, the organization has clarified how they will get an appropriate project team to work on the project.

Audience and Outreach

The project is designed to serve a clearly defined audience or community or is working towards readiness for that purpose and involves that community in the conception and execution of the project. The project 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.

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 or, if the project team is not yet complete, the organization has clarified how they will get the appropriate people in place 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. All workshops will be recorded. The recordings will be sent to registrants and posted on our YouTube and website.

- Applying for an NJCH Grant: September 7, 10:00 - 11:00 am
- Creating an Outstanding Proposal – Narrative: September 27, 12:00 - 12:45 pm
- Creating an Outstanding Proposal – Budget: September 27, 1:00 - 1:45 pm

View information and RSVP for workshops [on our website](#). In addition to grants workshops, NJCH offers individuals and organizations opportunities for professional development, skill and capacity building, learning, and networking through our [In the Weeds](#) program.

Speak with NJCH Program Staff

NJCH Program Staff are available throughout the grant cycle to answer your questions and discuss your project. Please contact us at either 609.695.4303 or grants@njhumanities.org. We can answer simple questions quickly via phone or email. We also recognize there are instances where more in-depth guidance and discussion is needed and offer organizations the opportunity to schedule one-on-one meetings with NJCH program staff. Contact us via email to schedule a meeting.

Draft Review

Invited applicants may submit one draft for review by the draft deadline. NJCH staff will typically provide written feedback on your draft proposal, but it can be incorporated into scheduled meetings. Our goal is to keep the turnaround time as short as possible, but it will be dependent upon demand, and we recommend that you submit your draft before the draft deadline.

We do not require complete applications for draft review. If you are unable to complete the full application by the draft review deadline, a completed budget and partial narrative is often more useful than a complete narrative and no budget.

Draft applications should be sent to grants@njhumanities.org as Word, Excel, and/or PDF documents. An easy way to create a PDF of your draft application is to click the “Application Packet” button in the application page of our online grant management system.

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 attend/watch one of the grant webinars before reaching out to NJCH staff directly.

I have an open grant with NJCH or am involved in another NJCH program (such as Community History, Humanities Lab, Informed NJ, etc.). Can I still apply for a grant?

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 involved in another NJCH program should consult the program director prior to applying for a grant to determine eligibility.

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. An NJCH staff member 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](#).

Where can I find your logo or other publicity materials?

Our logo and other publicity resources are available on our Resources page.

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.

What is the UEI? And why do I need one?

The UEI (Unique Entity ID) is a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to an organization by the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and used as the identifier for federal funding opportunities.

Since NJCH regrants federal funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), organizations will need to have a verifiable UEI from SAM.gov by the application deadline. While organizations are required to have a UEI completing the full SAM.gov registration process is not a requirement for our grants. Please note that the UEI replaces the DUNS number that was previously used as the identifier for federal funding opportunities. To learn more please visit [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).

Updated 8/28/2023. As new or additional information becomes available, questions and answers may be added to the FAQ. Check back regularly for updates.