



**For 53 years**, NJCH has provided stable support to the cultural sector of New Jersey. We strengthened communities through programs that fostered civic engagement and helped the people of the Garden State examine their histories, values, cultures, and beliefs.

That all changed in the middle of the night on April 2, 2025, when NJCH received an email stating that our federal operating support grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities had been terminated, effective immediately, because our work no longer aligned with the priorities of the administration.

About 90% of NJCH's FY25 budget was funded by our federal grant, so the organization found itself suddenly in the midst of an existential crisis. We were not alone; approximately 1,600 NEH grants nationwide were cancelled, and NEH cut 80% of its staff.

In that crisis moment, we decided to act immediately to preserve NJCH as an institution. We shifted overnight into an austerity mode, shutting down our Grants and Sponsorships programs and paying out existing commitments. We spent the next weeks terminating or renegotiating contracts with vendors. We had to let two staff members go, as their portfolios had disappeared with our funding.

Our goal in making these changes was to buy ourselves time to realign our funding strategy and business model such that we can be self-sustaining without federal funding by the time our reserves run out. Now we are working to raise much-needed funding to sustain our staff of four and our remaining programs.

The future is uncertain, but the humanities are more important than ever—a critical tool to create the world we all want to live in. And NJCH will never stop fighting for New Jersey's invaluable cultural sector.

### *Forward.*



**53**

YEARS SERVING NJ



**90%**

CUT TO OUR FY25 BUDGET



**1,600+**

NEH GRANTS CUT NATIONALLY

### »» **WHAT IS HUMANITIES FORWARD?**

In May and June 2025, NJCH hosted a series of conversations, both in-person and virtual, with a wide variety of stakeholders from institutions across the state. These included museums, arts institutions, libraries, colleges, and social service organizations. The goals were to:

- » Share information about the funding cut, and
- » Brainstorm how NJCH could continue to support humanities work without federal funding.

These conversations will inform the future work of the organizations. Participants made it clear that a sense of precarity is widespread and that opportunities to come together to share information and work on solutions are imperative. **The consensus is that collective action is the best way to move forward.**

## ▶▶ WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Based on our Humanities Forward conversations, NJCH has felt deeper immediate impacts from funding cuts than most of our stakeholder organizations. However, similar psychological impacts are being felt throughout the sector.

- » Most feel a sense of vulnerability and uncertainty.
- » People are not communicating in typical ways.
- » Many of us are working in survival mode, which encourages turning inward and does not allow time for reflection.

## ▶▶ MOVING FORWARD

Listening to our stakeholders throughout the state, we learned the following takeaways:

### **NJCH is the statewide convener of the humanities.**

- » No one else does what we do.
- » We are a trusted resource to both academics and public humanities practitioners.
- » NJCH serves as a bridge between those two important populations, and between practitioners and the public. This service may be the greatest value we offer.
- » NJCH brings a unique perspective as a bridge organization.
- » Opportunities for convening fight isolation and siloing that can be so damaging to the field.
- » Gathering offers both intentional and serendipitous meetings between individuals.

### **NJCH can help the field articulate what the humanities are and do.**

- » NJCH can activate those who work locally to think more statewide.
- » The actions of our government right now reflect the tech ethos “move quickly and break things.” We need to move slowly and build things.
- » NJCH advocates statewide and nationally for the value of the humanities.
- » NJCH can help connect the humanities in NJ to a national context.
- » NJCH can be the voice for humanities institutions across the state, articulating a cohesive message.

### **The local matters a great deal.**

- » History is hiding in people’s attics! These are exactly the stories that will give us the nuanced, polyvocal history that will allow us to tell an expansive story of our world.
- » Small, decentralized institutions and practitioners (like many we have in the NJ humanities community) are a real asset, as they are often more nimble and can fly under the radar in a way that large institutions cannot.
- » Larger institutions can amplify regional communities, and NJCH can extend their messages.

### **Documenting loss is a critical thing that the whole community can do in this moment.**

- » NJCH can support this work through conducting trainings in archive and documentation practices.
- » We can share information about what types of documentation projects are happening or need assistance.
- » NJCH can help organize collaborative networks for sharing resources.
- » The loss of NJCH grants, even low dollar awards, is meaningful to the community because the funds serve as a springboard into other humanities spaces, making connections, etc.
- » There is a conspicuous absence of humanities philanthropy without NJCH, and the humanities philanthropy that does exist is geographically limited/clustered.