



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE  
**Humanities**

DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
FOR A COOPERATIVE  
AGREEMENT TO  
IMPLEMENT THE  
NATIONAL SPOKEN WORD  
POETRY AMBASSADORS  
PROGRAM**

Deadline: January 14, 2016 (for projects beginning April 2016)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 45.162

---

**Items referred to in this document needed to complete your application:**

- Budget instructions
- Budget form
- Grants.gov application package and instructions

Also see the **application checklist** at the end of this document.

**Questions?**

Questions about this request for proposals can be answered by calling John Abodeely in the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities office at (202) 682-5631 or by sending an e-mail to [JAbodeely@pcah.gov](mailto:JAbodeely@pcah.gov). You can also call Victoria Sams in the Division of Education Programs at the National

Endowment for the Humanities at (202) 606-8283 or send an e-mail to [vsams@neh.gov](mailto:vsams@neh.gov).

### **Type of award**

One award will be given in matching funds.

### **Submission via Grants.gov**

**All applications to this program must be submitted via Grants.gov.** NEH strongly recommends that you complete or verify your Grants.gov registration at least two weeks before the application deadline, since it takes time to process your registration.

### **System for Award Management Entity records**

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires federal agencies to make information about the expenditure of tax funds available to the public. To facilitate this, the applicant organization must maintain current information in its Entity record in the System for Award Management (SAM). You must therefore review and update the information in your organization's Entity record at least annually after the initial registration, and more frequently if required by changes in your organization's information or another award term. In order for your organization to apply for an award via Grants.gov, receive an award, or receive payment on an award, the information in its Entity record must be current. You can update your organization's Entity record [here](#). You may need a new SAM User Account to register your organization or update its Entity record. NEH strongly recommends that applicants update (or, if necessary, create) their SAM Entity record at least four weeks before the application deadline.

## **I. Program Description**

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) are creating a new opportunity for more American youths to learn about and interact with spoken word poetry and poets. This request for proposals seeks an organizational partner to launch and direct the National Spoken Word Poetry Ambassadors Program. The program will further the mission of NEH's [Common Good initiative](#) to engage the humanities in the great questions that we face as a nation. It will also develop a group of young poets (students in grades 10-11): writers and leaders who will respond to these questions. The program will select poetry ambassadors who will bring the creation, appreciation, and experience of spoken word poetry to more young people throughout the country. Humanities scholars and educators will engage the work of these young poets; the scholars and educators will place the poets' work in a broader literary, artistic, and historical context.

The National Spoken Word Poetry Ambassadors Program will run parallel to the National Student Poets Program (NSPP) and will enhance its efforts to develop ambassadorial skills and local leadership among selected youth poets. The PCAH, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers partnered in 2012 to create the NSPP, which for the past few years has offered the country's highest honor for young poets (students in grades 10–11) presenting original work. The NSPP selects five students annually to serve for one year as literary ambassadors, each representing one of five different geographic regions (Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West) of the country. By elevating and showcasing their work for a national audience in dialogue with established poets, the program strives to inspire other young people to achieve excellence in their own creative and scholarly endeavors and to promote the essential role of writing and the arts in achieving academic and personal success.

Building on the success of the NSPP, the National Spoken Word Poetry Ambassadors Program—a joint effort of NEH and PCAH—will select additional spoken word poets (one from each region) to create and perform their own poetry and to become spokespeople for the appreciation and use of poetry in American life. With the support and guidance of the awardee organization, poetry ambassadors will participate in at least three ambassadorial events in their region during their one-year term. These events should be occasions for considering a key humanistic topic. Topics might include those raised in NEH's new [Common Good](#) initiative, or comparably broad questions: for example, the experience of war, the relations of humans to one another or to the natural world, justice, citizenship, or the meaning of a good life. In these events the ambassadors will also collaborate with other writers or humanities educators to engage their audiences in reading poetry and discussing the craft and history of poetry. For example, a poetry ambassador might perform his or her poetry in conjunction with a curator's discussion of the links between poetry and painting.

Previous ambassadorial events include youth poetry workshops; readings at schools, libraries, community centers, and senior centers; readings at civic events (such as the opening of a municipal library); and participating in literary festivals. The ambassadors will develop their talents as writers and leaders, while also contributing to the communities in which they will speak and the lives of other poets.

NEH is particularly interested in the following:

- reaching communities that are underserved or otherwise unlikely to host humanities programs, as well as geographically diverse communities throughout the United States;
- creating leadership opportunities for selected poets to speak about poetry, in partnership with humanities experts who will bring their knowledge to each ambassadorial event;
- deepening public appreciation for and understanding of the craft and history of poetry;
- organizational development for the selected organizations and youth development for the poets; and
- opportunities to sustain the ambassadors initiative when federal funding for it ceases.

In partnership with the PCAH, the awardee organization will

- create a process to select five community-focused spoken word poetry organizations that will work with the awardee organization to identify student ambassadors from the five regions represented in NSPP;
- organize an online or in-person orientation for selected poets and organizations;
- provide guidance to the partner organizations to help them identify and plan a minimum of three ambassadorial events for each poet in their region, with each event involving the reading and discussion of selected poems and the exploration of humanistic themes and topics (featuring both a youth poet and a humanities expert);
- host an in-person, concluding seminar on leadership and service;
- arrange travel and support for the ambassadors, as needed, providing both logistics and support for their individual outreach efforts;
- provide administrative staff to support program-related meetings, travel, planning, and other needs;
- dedicate senior staff to collaborate in the development of the program and oversee its execution;
- provide a minimum of one-to-two match funding (that is, one dollar raised from third parties for each two federal dollars received) for the award amount (one-to-one match funding is preferred); and
- develop an online presence for the new program, maximizing existing social media and outreach (with rights secured for the use and release of the poets' work).

NSPP partner organizations will provide some technical assistance for executing the ambassadors program and will coordinate information to ensure alignment between the program and NSPP.

**The award resulting from this request for proposals may not support**

- projects that seek to promote a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view;
- projects that advocate a particular program of social action;
- projects that support obscene, libelous, indecent, or defamatory content (including hate speech, personal attacks, or material constituting harassment); or
- events not open to the general public or events charging a fee for admission.

**Providing access to products and programs resulting from the award**

As a taxpayer-supported federal agency, NEH endeavors to make the products of its awards available to the broadest possible audience. Our goal is for scholars, educators, students, and the American public to have ready and easy access to the wide range of NEH award products.

**II. Award Information**

The National Endowment for the Humanities will support one cooperative agreement of up to \$80,000 in matching funds for a pilot year to appropriately create and launch the National

Poetry Ambassadors Program. Depending on the program performance in the first year, NEH may renew the project for a second year.

NEH will make the award in April 2016. The award period should last for one year (for example, April 2016 through March 2017). The award must begin no later than June 2016.

NEH will work closely with the recipient of the cooperative agreement on the matters and activities set forth in the scope of work.

### **Cost Sharing**

NEH requires a minimum of one-to-two third-party funds (that is, one dollar raised from third parties for each two federal matching dollars to be released). NEH prefers one-to-one third-party funds (that is, one dollar raised from third parties for each one federal matching dollar to be released).

Cost sharing consists of the cash contributions made to a project by the applicant, third parties, and other federal agencies, as well as third party in-kind contributions, such as donated services and goods. Cost sharing also includes nonfederal gift money raised from third parties to release federal matching funds. Federal matching funds will be released on a one-to-two or one-to-one basis, as indicated in the approved application budget, when an awardee secures gift funds from eligible third parties (see NEH's [Federal Matching Funds Guidelines](#)).

### **III. Eligibility**

Any U.S. nonprofit organization with IRS tax-exempt status is eligible, as are state and local governmental agencies and federally recognized Indian tribal governments. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

NEH generally does not award grants to other federal entities or to applicants whose projects are so closely intertwined with a federal entity that the project takes on characteristics of the federal entity's own authorized activities. This does not preclude applicants from using grant funds from, or sites and materials controlled by, other federal entities in their projects.

Late, incomplete, or ineligible proposals will not be reviewed.

### **IV. Application and Submission Information**

Prior to submitting an application, applicants may contact Victoria Sams at (202) 606-8283 or [vsams@neh.gov](mailto:vsams@neh.gov) (or John Abodeely at (202) 682-5631 or [JAbodeely@pcah.gov](mailto:JAbodeely@pcah.gov)) with any questions about preparing the proposal. All applications must be completed and submitted via Grants.gov.

A complete application includes the following:

1. Table of Contents

List all parts of the application and page numbers.

2. Narrative Essay (no longer than four single-spaced, numbered pages) containing the following:

- a. *Description of the Applicant Organization:* Provide a profile of the applicant organization, including its mission, size, current activities, characteristics that position it to run a national initiative as described, experience working directly both with student poets and with other nonprofits in organizational development, relevant resources (such as special staff expertise or infrastructure), and previous experience in managing and leveraging a national network.
- b. *Description of Project Plan:* Describe the proposed program content and activities and the process of implementing it, providing a timeline for the major steps that you would take, the process for selecting partner organizations, and suggestions for the selection of youth poets, scholars, and topics for the ambassadorial events.
- c. *Assessing Success:* Explain how you would evaluate the success of the initiative in the following areas.
  1. Access: Have we reached youth that otherwise would not have experienced poetry and opportunities for leadership?
  2. Youth development: How has the experience benefited the students who participated in the initiative?
  3. Poetry appreciation: How have the students gained a fuller and deeper understanding of the art and craft of poetry and of the ways in which poems can address major humanistic questions?
  4. Organizational development: How has the experience benefited the organizations that participated in the initiative?
- d. *Staff:* Provide information on the principal members of the project team, using a short paragraph to describe the specific expertise of each as it pertains to project goals. Also, briefly describe the role that each person will play in the initiative.
- e. *Fundraising:* Discuss the plans for raising at least one-to-two (and ideally one-to-one) matching funds.

3. Budget

Using the instructions and the sample budget, complete the budget form (MS Excel format) or a format of your own that includes all the required information. (You can find links to the budget instructions, sample budget, and budget form on the [program resource page](#).) Submit your budget in a font of at least eleven points. Your budget must be free of mathematical errors.

Note that the sample budget requests one-to-one matching funds. For applicants requesting one-to-two matching funds, budget item 11 would need to be changed. In that item Federal Matching Funds would come to two-thirds (not one-half) of Total Project Funding (item 12); Third-Party Contributions would come to one-third (not one-half) of Total Project Funding.

If you wish, you may include a budget narrative (separate pages with notes to explain any of the budget items in more detail). You should retain a copy of your budget form.

If the applicant institution is claiming indirect costs, submit a copy of its current federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement. Do not attach the agreement to your budget form. Instead you must attach it to the Budget Narrative Attachment Form (also known as the Budget Narrative File). (See the instructions for this form in the Application Checklist at the end of this document.) Alternatively, you must attach a statement to the form, explaining a) that the applicant institution is not claiming indirect costs; b) that the applicant institution does not currently have a federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement; or c) that the applicant institution is using the government-wide rate of up to 10 percent of the total direct costs, less distorting items (including but not limited to capital expenditures, participant stipends, fellowships, and the portion of each subgrant or subcontract in excess of \$25,000).

#### 4. Supplementary material

You may provide supplementary material that demonstrates relevant experience in this section of the application.

## HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

The application must be submitted to Grants.gov. Links to the Grants.gov application package and instructions for preparing and submitting the package can be found on the [program resource page](#). Be sure to read the [document](#) (PDF) that explains how to confirm that you successfully submitted your application.

## DEADLINES

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on January 14, 2016. Grants.gov will date- and time-stamp your application after it is fully uploaded. Applications submitted after that date will not be accepted.

## V. Application Review

Evaluators are asked to apply the following **evaluation criteria**:

- Can the applicant organization recruit high-quality local spoken word, youth-oriented poetry organizations and students through a national network in a timely fashion, and can it work with them to select poetry ambassadors to serve their designated communities?
- Does the program proposed by the applicant organization promise to excel at promoting the humanistic understanding and appreciation of poetry and to engage broad questions such as those at the heart of the Common Good initiative?
- Are the work plan and budget clear and feasible?
- Has the applicant organization demonstrated its ability to impact the organizational development of local youth poetry organizations through support and capacity building, and to measure that impact?
- Has the applicant organization demonstrated its ability to impact youth development for selected spoken word ambassador poets, and to measure that impact?
- Is the applicant organization able to provide at least one-to-two matching funds (and ideally one-to-one matching funds)?
- Do the project personnel (staff, administrators, participating poets and educators) possess the necessary expertise and experience to achieve the goals of the program, to work with teens, and to execute the project plan?
- Has the applicant organization demonstrated its capacity to continue the program after federal funding for it ceases?

### Review and selection process

Knowledgeable persons outside NEH and PCAH will read each application and advise the agency about its merits. NEH staff and PCAH staff comment on matters of fact or on significant issues that otherwise would be missing from these reviews, then make recommendations to the National Council on the Humanities. The National Council meets at various times during the year to advise the NEH chairman on grants. The chairman takes into account the advice provided by the review process and, by law, makes all funding decisions. More details about NEH's review process are available [here](#).

## VI. Award Administration Information

Applicants will be notified of the decision by e-mail in March 2016. Institutional grants administrators and project directors of successful applications will receive award documents by e-mail in April 2016. Award documents will identify the relevant terms, conditions, and administrative requirements that pertain to successful applications. The [Grant Management](#) section of the NEH website outlines all the responsibilities of award recipients, including anti-lobbying restrictions, in great detail. Applicants may obtain the evaluations of their applications by sending an e-mail message to [vsams@neh.gov](mailto:vsams@neh.gov).

The instrument that will be awarded as a result of this request for proposals is a cooperative agreement, as defined by the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Public Law

95-224, as amended. A cooperative agreement is a cost reimbursement instrument. No fee or profit (or other increment above allowable cost) is allowed.

The award notice for the cooperative agreement will set forth the terms and conditions of the expected relationship between the awardee and the NEH in greater detail. The terms and conditions would include but not be limited to the awardee's providing information about the timeline and program activities, quarterly progress reports submitted to the appropriate program contact person, more frequent updates around events or initiative milestones, and other communication, as needed.

## VII. Points of Contact

If you have questions about the program, contact John Abodeely at (202) 682-5631 or [JAbodeely@pcah.gov](mailto:JAbodeely@pcah.gov) or Victoria Sams at (202) 606-8283 or [vsams@neh.gov](mailto:vsams@neh.gov).

If you need help using Grants.gov, refer to

Grants.gov: [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov)

Grants.gov help desk: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Grants.gov customer support tutorials and manuals:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-tools-and-tips.html>

Grants.gov support line: 1-800-518-GRANTS (4726)

## VIII. Other Information

### Privacy policy

Information in these guidelines is solicited under the authority of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, as amended, 20 U.S.C. 956. The principal purpose for which the information will be used is to process the grant application. The information may also be used for statistical research, analysis of trends, and Congressional oversight. Failure to provide the information may result in the delay or rejection of the application.

### Application completion time

The Office of Management and Budget requires federal agencies to supply information on the time needed to complete forms and also to invite comments on the paperwork burden. NEH estimates that the average time to complete this application is three hours per response. This estimate includes time for reviewing instructions, researching, gathering, and maintaining the information needed, and completing and reviewing the application.

Please send any comments regarding the estimated completion time or any other aspect of this application, including suggestions for reducing the completion time, to the Chief Guidelines Officer, at [guidelines@neh.gov](mailto:guidelines@neh.gov); the Office of Publications, National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C. 20506; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork

Reduction Project (3136-0134), Washington, D.C. 20503. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number.

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- **Verify and if necessary update your institution’s Entity record, or create an Entity record for your institution, at the System for Award Management (SAM).** Complete at least four weeks before the deadline.
- **Verify your institution’s registration or register your institution with Grants.gov.** Complete at least two weeks before deadline.
- **Download the application package from Grants.gov.** The [program resource page](#) on NEH’s website has a direct link to the package. (Note that Grants.gov tells you to download the “application instruction” as well as the “application package.” The “application instruction” is this document, so there’s no need to download it.) Alternatively, you can search Grants.gov for this program. The program resource page also has a direct link to the instructions for completing the package.
- **Complete the following forms contained in the Grants.gov application package.**
  1. Application for Federal Domestic Assistance - Short Organizational
  2. Supplementary Cover Sheet for NEH Grant Programs
  3. Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form
  4. Attachments Form—Using this form, attach the parts of your application as described in the guidelines:
    - ATTACHMENT 1: Table of contents (name the file “contents.pdf”)
    - ATTACHMENT 2: Narrative (name the file “narrative.pdf”)
    - ATTACHMENT 3: Budget (name the file “budget.pdf”)
    - ATTACHMENT 4: Supplementary material, if applicable (name the file “supplementary material.pdf”)
  5. Budget Narrative Attachment Form (also known as the Budget Narrative File)—Using this form, attach **only** a copy of your institution’s current federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement (or an explanation why you are not attaching such an agreement). (See the Grants.gov instructions for institutional applicants, which are available on the program resource page, for additional information.)

Your attachments must be in Portable Document Format (.pdf). We cannot accept attachments in their original word processing or spreadsheet formats. If you don't already have software to convert your files into PDFs, many low-cost and free software packages will do so. You can learn more about converting documents into PDFs [here](#).

**Upload your application to Grants.gov.** NEH **strongly** suggests that you submit your application no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the day of the deadline. Doing so will leave you time to contact the Grants.gov help desk for support, should you encounter a technical problem of some kind. The Grants.gov help desk is now available seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day (except on [federal holidays](#)), at 1-800-518-4726. You can also send an e-mail message to [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

Be sure to read the [document](#) (PDF) that explains how to confirm that you successfully submitted your application to Grants.gov.