



National
Endowment
for the
Humanities

Division
of
State
Programs

New Chairs Handbook

State Humanities Councils

A Handbook for New Chairs
of State Humanities Councils

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INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

The National Endowment for the Humanities is an independent grant-making agency established by Congress in 1965 to support research, education, and public projects in the humanities. The Endowment supports work in the humanities through programs administered by six divisions — Education Programs, Fellowships and Seminars, Preservation and Access, Public Programs, Research Programs, and State Programs — and by the Office of Challenge Grants. As part of this national effort, the state humanities councils, first established in the early 1970s, support the humanities through their overall program plans designed to meet the needs of their respective states. These plans are realized partly through the competitive regranteeing of funds on a local level and partly through a council's own projects and initiatives.

The state humanities councils make public humanities programs available to citizens who might otherwise not have easy access to them. Depending on the state's demography, this might mean reaching small rural communities, fostering projects in urban neighborhoods, or promoting the more active involvement of certain segments of the state's population, such as older adults or various ethnic groups. Although the federal government has provided a broad mandate, each council, as an independent non-profit organization, sets its own programming priorities and directions and defines the best ways to fulfill that mandate through a careful analysis of the interests, needs, and resources in its state.

When the councils were first established, their focus was exclusively on public policy issues, and their primary audience was the adult, out-of-school public. Since 1976, when they were expressly incorporated in the federal legislation that authorizes NEH, the state councils have been able to experiment with a wide variety of programs designed for specific audiences. Although still concerned primarily with reaching the general public, many councils have expanded their audiences to include teachers and students, newly literate adults, prison inmates, senior citizens, and other groups. There are currently 55 councils: one in each state, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

THE COUNCIL SETTING

Chairing a state humanities council is an experience like no other, regardless of how varied a person's background and training may be. The councils oversee the expenditure of millions of taxpayers' dollars, yet they operate as independent entities and rely on citizen volunteers to carry out this task. Councils devise comprehensive plans for meeting the needs of their state, maintain strong grantmaking programs, promote special programming, and organize and conduct their own projects. They act as a bridge between scholars and the public and forge new connections among a state's institutional, financial, and human resources. Simultaneously local and national in scope, the councils' primary responsibility is to know the needs and resources of their own state while keeping alert to the work of other state councils and to national and international issues that need to be incorporated into local humanities programs. As state humanities councils move beyond the first twenty years of their existence it has become clear that their potential is limited only by the collective imagination of their boards and staffs.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE POSITION

The prospect of being chosen to lead such a multifaceted organization presents some obvious challenges. The leadership involves, among other things:

- Accepting legal responsibility, as chief volunteer officer, for the council and its NEH grants;
- Overseeing continuity in the council's ongoing initiatives as well as helping to plan new ones;
- Representing the council within the state and at national meetings;
- Working with a diverse and geographically dispersed group of board members;
- Establishing and maintaining a working relationship with a professional staff and overseeing the evaluation of the executive director;
- Setting agendas and presiding at meetings; and
- Monitoring the organization's fiscal health

Thus, the need to understand the job of chair in some systematic way is an important first step for someone who has been recently elected. As part of preparing for the role, it helps to remember that a person serving as chair always acts on behalf of an enduring institution. One of the most fundamental tasks of any chair is to marshal one's own personal talents for leadership and vision for the good of an organization which has its own history and direction.

There are only fifty-five state humanities council chairs in the entire national program, making the position one of great privilege as well as one of great responsibility. Chairs act as public representatives for their councils and for the humanities within the state, whether this entails attending funded programs, speaking to the public about the council's work, or presiding over council meetings. Chairs also are the official representatives of the board with NEH. Commenting on the importance of this institutional role of chairs, one executive director wrote:

They are not figureheads. They must be intimately familiar with the mission of the council. They should be so conversant with the long-range goals and objectives of their council that they can allude to them during council meetings to keep the board moving ahead. Chairs need to be very familiar with the board's bylaws, and they need to keep board members apprised of the history and rationale of policy decisions. In this sense, the chair is the council's memory.

In addition, because councils work with a variety of groups and organizations, it is useful for a chair to be knowledgeable about the state's broader cultural and institutional context. As one respondent advised:

Chairs need to gain exposure to the wide range of humanities needs and interests in the state. Since councils deal with the whole range of institutions and humanities needs — K through 12, colleges and universities, libraries, museums, foundations, state governments, and so forth — it might be helpful to spend some time getting thoroughly acquainted with the extraordinary mix of issues, themes, and institutions that councils deal with. The more an incoming chair has a background (and that can certainly include volunteer efforts) that has provided this sort of wide exposure and experience, the more he or she will have a start in the area.

Former and current chairs often cite the challenge of really understanding their council and its place within the state as the greatest one that they have faced during their tenures. In part this is due to the councils' ever-expanding roles. Like Heraclitus's river, the council one joins is not the same council from which one retires several years later. Whether the issues involve evaluation of the overall program and the exploration of new programmatic possibilities, responding to suggestions raised in public meetings, board development, raising funds, broadening constituencies, or greater attention to long-range planning, a council is constantly in flux. One chair commented that "the greatest challenge I faced was that of responding appropriately to the fact that the council was growing up to be an organization that had to project itself more effectively in the community, plan for its own direction more thoughtfully, and define its internal procedures more thoroughly."

In addition, the personal talents and plans of individual chairs can prove to be crucial to the continued growth and vibrancy of a council and may constitute a necessary part of the desirable balance in that role. One person was insistent that the best chairs are those who bring their own talents and interests to the task:

Each chair should have a plan for using his/her skills to advance the goals and mission of the organization. For example, one of our former chairs is an artist and gave a great deal of herself in helping us redesign our image and increase our visibility. Our new chair has much experience in board development and fundraising.

The ideal chair, then, is one who can offer energetic new leadership to the group while helping to maintain the council's continuity and consistency.

PREPARING FOR AND FULFILLING THE TASK

Accumulating Experience

Expecting a new chair to step almost effortlessly into such a demanding role constitutes a tall order, and the people contacted were virtually unanimous in stressing the importance of beginning the training of future chairs as early in their council careers as possible. One former chair considered it the council's responsibility to ensure that "possible future leaders of the group are placed in offices and on committees early in their terms." Potential chairs can gain valuable experience also through attending orientation conferences and national meetings.

Serving as vice-chair is a particularly effective way not only to learn more about council operations but also to begin to attend national meetings, to get to know NEH program officers and colleagues from other councils, to chair portions of council meetings, and to gain familiarity with the major issues and responsibilities one will ultimately face. One former chair commented, "As chair-elect I was able to make mental practice decisions, to silently ask myself how I would have acted in real situations." In addition, the vice-chair has the regular opportunity to confer with the current chair as issues arise, helping to maintain continuity and consistency in council leadership. One person also suggested that vice chairs and chairs make sure that they are on the mailing lists of other state councils and recommended keeping abreast of such materials as the NEH magazine *Humanities*, the NEH Chairman's reports, newsletters from scholarly organizations, and reports from the Federation of State Humanities Councils.

Setting Goals

There is nothing like the prospect of being (in the words of one former chair) "responsible for over one million dollars of the public's money" to concentrate one's mind wonderfully. Most new chairs have found that the logical first step is that of establishing perspective on where the council is headed, based on its own history and long-range plans. One chair recommended:

Determine the tasks that, as chair, you are to perform. Ask former chairs, ask NEH, ask the staff, ask the committee members, ask yourself. Write yourself a job description. Give yourself some realistic goals and objectives — just as we ask of grantees. Evaluate yourself.

Devoting serious thought to these broad questions within the context of specific aims and goals of one's own council often makes it easier to set priorities and to envision what might be accomplished during one's tenure.

Drawing the board members into this process can also be very productive. One new chair convened a weekend meeting of the council's planning committee to "identify issues which would probably demand our attention in the coming years" and to "connect, from the beginning, the guidance of the committee as closely as possible to consensus among the members." This need for clarity of vision among the council members was emphasized as well by another former chair who counseled:

Make sure that the goals and procedures are as clear as they can be. I know I sound like a stick-in-the-mud bureaucrat, but my not-so-positive administrative experience has emphasized over and over again the importance of what is so simple and yet so difficult to do: know what we are working for and how to accomplish it.

Being able to establish priorities is invaluable. The clearer the goals are, the more likely it is that a chair and a council will be able to look back with satisfaction at what they have accomplished. Chairs cited various accomplishments resulting from such clear planning: implementing successful statewide projects, activating alumni associations, helping to formulate successful Exemplary Award projects, revising the council's mission statement, gaining state funding, strengthening long-range planning, and improving outreach to underserved audiences, among others. The variety of these achievements is a good indication of the challenges a chair and a board may face and also serves as a reminder of the need to pursue a chosen direction with care and foresight. As one chair observed:

The greatest accomplishment of a chair should not be an event or a pet project brought to fruition. It should be leaving the board in capable hands. That has indeed been my greatest accomplishment: a chair and an executive committee who know where they are going and how they can get there.

Tapping Available Information

As part of the groundwork necessary for helping to set proper priorities and leading a council, "an incoming chair needs to have detailed knowledge of how his or her own council is operating, starting with council finances, and what its problems or potential problems are." Another chair underscored that observation:

Chairs must take very seriously the charge that they are ultimately financially responsible for the transactions of the state committee. They must insist that they are fully informed on all financial matters, that they understand them, and that anything significant or troublesome is brought to the attention of the entire committee. Chairs should also be sure that appropriate audits are performed, that they understand how those audits are done, and that they are thorough, complete, and timely.

In addition to understanding the budget, other information from a number of sources is necessary. The chair needs to review some basic materials from the the council itself, such as current by-laws, documents that outline the existing long-range plan and its present status, current and previous proposals to NEH, previous review letters from NEH, annual reports, minutes, program announcements for ongoing or previous initiatives, personnel policies, and any other relevant documents. Some chairs also recommend reviewing the council's policies toward providing liability insurance for the board and staff. They recommend as well making sure that the board has established procedures for obtaining reliable legal advice. Reviewing NEH's authorizing legislation is also valuable. One council provides its new chairs with a three-ring binder that contains the minutes of full board meetings and executive committee meetings for the previous two years; a list of all board members, together with their addresses and telephone numbers; a list of all council committees, their duties, and members; the current budget submitted to NEH as well as a detailed administrative budget; the council bylaws; and the council's personnel policy.

The executive director for this council also prepares "a chronological chart for the year, outlining month-by-month the tasks the staff would accomplish with the help of the board," and, in an extended meeting with the new chair, answers questions and establishes "a sense of how this particular chair would prefer to exchange information throughout the year, how the chair might like to direct board meetings, and how to make the most effective use of limited time." Such attention to detail helps to insure that both the chair and the executive director are working from the same information, and it also reinforces everyone's commitment to sharing responsibilities so that the council's work can be carried out more effectively.

Information from external sources is also very useful. Because state councils tend to operate separately from one another, chairs find that they can profit greatly from reviewing proposals from other states. These are easily obtained through the program officers at NEH, and they can offer comparative perspectives on programming and provide a good source of new ideas. Attending national meetings, as mentioned previously, is another way of getting acquainted with common issues faced by state councils. The national meetings for state council chairs are especially useful for discussing such issues as institutional advancement, setting program priorities, networking with other cultural organizations within states, and reaching new audiences.

Working With the Council Staff

Another essential step for a new chair is that of building a solid working relationship with the executive director and the rest of the staff as soon after the election as possible (or even before, in the case of a chair-elect). "Shortly after assuming my duties, the director and I spent a good morning together. This provided me with all sorts of useful information. Perhaps more important, the meeting itself set the tone for our working relationship for the following year and a half." Because their tenures usually exceed those of most board members and they are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organization, the staff is able to provide much of the background information necessary for an in-depth understanding of a council. According to one former chair, "Development of the appropriate relationship with the executive director is perhaps the most crucial element of the initial period. Even in the best of situations, each must know the responsibilities of each office and how they are complementary."

The executive director and the new chair should spend some time together to discuss relevant past information, future plans, and any issues which will need to be addressed over the course of the next several months. As one chair noted, "it's advisable to know as much as possible about the executive director's working style and personality, since chairs will be working more closely with these people than they can ever know." Frequent ongoing communication is also essential. One executive director considers it "my responsibility to communicate regularly by phone or mail with the chair, brief him or her on budget and finances, committee agendas, alert her to any problems or possible controversies, etc. I firmly believe the strength of our organization rests on the working relationship between chair and director. Compatible visions are essential."

Understanding the Board

It is important to insure that the individual members of the board remain actively involved in carrying out the council's work, and a chair plays an important role in motivating them. One chair noted:

I think there is a temptation to try to do too much oneself as chair. I think a chair should concentrate on making sure that neither he or she, nor the executive director, becomes indispensable, which means making sure that the real work is being done by the board and its committees and that every one on the board is well informed and engaged in some way.

As one way of facilitating the active participation of board members, one former chair "read application materials for new members, talked to mutual acquaintances, and reviewed vitas for continuing council members." This helped the chair to "discover areas of knowledge/interest/experience which hadn't been obvious to me before." According to another chair, this ability to draw people into the process is particularly important for "new members who are sometimes reticent about expressing an opinion. They need to be assured that they are welcome, and that their opinions are respected."

In much the same way that a chair's personal attributes enhance the institutional life of the council, each board member is a part of the collective reservoir of talent available to the program. As one former chair observed:

Each member of the board has one thing or another to offer, but none can do everything. In my year as chair we had an attorney who helped us with a legal threat, a businessman who helped with big contributions, an assemblyman who enabled us to get a one-time state appropriation, a number of people experienced in fundraising, some who were experts at five-year plans and things like that. In short, everyone contributed something. It was also good that we had representatives from across the state which made it possible for us to understand, through them, the universities, the Indian reservations, the minorities in the big cities, the small private colleges, the museums and libraries, and even the labor unions in the state.

A chair should also keep in touch with board members between meetings and stay informed about each member's background to make sure that the council can make full use of their talents. This is an important prerequisite of a successful tenure, as well as a welcome legacy to one's successors.

Presiding Over the Council's Work

Translating one's knowledge of the board into effective meetings and subcommittee work is sometimes difficult, and most chairs indicate that, in fact, "the committee itself is the greatest challenge." The most productive councils are those in which the board moves forward with a shared sense of purpose and vision but fostering those shared perceptions and goals among a highly diverse group of people who meet infrequently requires skill and tact. One executive director thought that the "chair's most important function is to ensure that there is board consensus." On rare occasions, this means exercising a special kind of oversight over the board. As noted by one chair, it is most important that "all committee business be fair, in the open, and according to established policies and procedures. It is up to the chair to see that this is so and to be a model for the rest."

Offering some specific skills for presiding over meetings, one former chair suggested:

It is absolutely essential that the chair keep order. It means keeping the group focused, pulling things together. One should consciously synthesize comments and relate what one person said to another's comments. This necessitates close listening. Also, the chair should be a time manager, outlining meetings and keeping to schedule. In essence, thinking about a meeting as a group of people talking together, with the chair as shaper and moderator of what emerges really helps.

Another chair noted that it was crucial to "know and study the agendas for the meetings in order to get a feeling for timing, group dynamics, and potential disagreements." He also found it important to "study all proposals to be acted upon, and be sensitive to the potential responses." Another recommended that "chairs refresh their recollections about the rules set by NEH, by the council itself, and sometimes even by parliamentary procedure, though Robert's Rules are guides, not chains."

Perhaps the most important strategy for making sure that the work of the board runs smoothly is to take advantage of the chance for board members to take part in and enjoy a humanities activity, to participate themselves in the kind of programs which define the council. One chair advised, "Be sure that each meeting has a component where you experience and deal with the humanities. Read a book and discuss it. Go to a museum, a lecture, an exhibition. Remember why you are doing this."

Such common experiences in the humanities contribute substantially to fostering a repertory of shared experiences, a culture for the board and staff. This ongoing culture is one crucial component in a board's ability to establish an identity, to set goals, and to work toward them.

MAINTAINING PERSPECTIVE

Being first among one's peers on the board clearly presents significant challenges. To make sure that the council's ongoing program is responsive to the citizens of the state and is constantly undergoing evaluation, that new visions are realized, that working relationships with the staff are strong and cordial, that committees are functioning according to plan, and that time is wisely used at the board's meetings requires a great deal of skill and time from a chair. Yet, as one chair noted, "One not only survives but can actually flourish in this spot. You certainly leave with a sense of having done very good work, and of having met some very remarkable people who become enduring friends. And, in retrospect, you realize you also had fun, and were saved on many occasions by your own and your colleagues' sense of humor."

The key is finding the right combination of human and institutional resources to move the council forward, something which each council does uniquely in tailoring its approach to suit its state. As one chair observed, "I have found it amazing what can be accomplished among a diverse group of people, holding all varieties of opinion, if they can just be kept talking to one another, and perhaps more importantly, listening to one another."

The most useful advice that many chairs would pass on to their successors is to remember that chairing a council is an opportunity to be cherished. "Remember that you are privileged to lead a group of what may well prove to be the most erudite, diverse, articulate, and interesting people with whom you will ever work," reminisced one former chair. The councils continue to exercise a substantial impact on the intellectual life of their states, and the chance to help shape that kind of public education is one of the greatest rewards of council work.

Chairs should keep in mind as well that the one- or two-year period of their appointments is extremely brief and that there may be limitations on what can be accomplished. As with all endeavors, council work is an exercise in the art of the possible. The deep satisfaction of having been able to contribute to a council's programming legacy more than repays the effort. As a reminder of the importance of maintaining perspective, one chair eloquently observed:

Preside at council meetings with good humor and fairness.
Laughter, as someone has said, does not keep us from the truth
but from despair. Take your new position seriously, but not
too seriously, and never take credit for your successes. Graciously
insist that the credit for true successes belongs to your council
members and staff.

Appendix

Frequently Encountered Terms

(The following list provides some brief definitions of items that may not have been mentioned in the narrative but which chairs are likely to encounter in state council work. This list is most profitably viewed as a supplement that provides a detailed overview of some key concepts and terms.)

Audits - Councils and their grantees that are institutions of higher education or other nonprofit organizations are subject to the audit requirements of OMB Circular A-133. Grantees that are governmental units are responsible for obtaining audits in accordance with the Single Audit Act of 1984 and OMB Circular 128. Although councils are not required to have such a compliance audit done more frequently than every two years, the NEH recommends that this be done each year. Councils are also responsible for ensuring that a grantee who expends \$25,000 or more of federal funds during the council's fiscal year meets the audit requirements of the applicable OMB Circular — A-128 or A-133.

Base Grant - The minimum funding level, set by Congress, that is available to a council if it is found to be in compliance with the existing legislation and if its program is judged to be adequate through the peer review process. As specified in the authorizing legislation, the base grant comprises \$200,000 per council, plus 44% of the remaining appropriated funds distributed equally to all councils and 22% of the remainder distributed according to population. Treasury (matching) funds and National Program funds are not part of the base grant.

Biennial/Triennial Proposal - The proposal submitted to NEH which serves as a final report on the council's previous program activity and as a plan and application for continued funding for upcoming years. The proposal is reviewed by outside evaluators, Division of State Programs staff, the National Council on the Humanities, and the Chairman of NEH.

Certification - See Indefinite Funds.

Cash Cost Share - Cost sharing by a grantee that involves an actual cash outlay. An example would be money that a sponsoring institution might donate to a specific project.

Chairs Meetings - Normally the Division of State Programs holds a yearly meeting for council chairs as a way of enabling them to convene and discuss program ideas, planning, financial matters, and other areas of common concern.

Compliance Plan - The council's document to NEH demonstrating that the council is complying with congressionally mandated requirements for all the state councils. These include provisions for representative council membership and regular rotation of members, council governance, open solicitation for nominations, regular public meetings, and reports on council activities to elected officials and to the people of the state. An approved compliance plan is a prerequisite for becoming eligible to receive a grant for general support from the Division of State Programs.

Cost Share - NEH cannot support more than 50 percent of the costs of a state council's activities. The balance of support may come from cash contributions to the council that are made from any source (including funds from other federal agencies), program income the council has earned, allowable costs that a regrantee or contractor incurs in carrying out a council-funded project, and the value of in-kind contributions that are made by the board, regrantee, or third parties. The time spent by board members in reading proposals, attending meetings, traveling to and from meetings, and attending and evaluating council projects may count as cost sharing.

Council Project - A council can set aside a portion of its funds to conduct special projects on its own.

Council-Initiated Project - A project that a council does not actually administer but that has been solicited through a Request for Proposals or other special program announcement.

Definite Funds - The portion of NEH's total funds allocated by Congress to the Division of State Programs for grants to the state councils. (See "Indefinite Funds.")

Division of State Programs - One of six divisions within NEH. The Division is responsible for the overall state program effort. It provides orientation conferences for new council members, conducts the peer review process for state council applications, oversees the work of the state councils, assists them in realizing their program goals, and, through information sharing, helps them to remain abreast of national trends and developments.

Exemplary Award - State councils can apply to the Division for funding for special projects. The applications for State and Regional Exemplary Awards are reviewed yearly through a special grant competition. States may apply, either individually or in partnership with other states, for funds for either full-scale projects or for project planning.

Federation of State Humanities Councils - An independent membership organization for the state councils.

Fiscal Year - The fiscal year for NEH begins on October 1 and runs through September 30. The fiscal year for most state councils runs from November 1 through October 31.

Frankel Prizes - The Charles Frankel Prize is given yearly by NEH to up to five scholars in the humanities who have brought to general audiences — national, regional, or local — a greater understanding of the texts, themes, and ideas in history, literature, philosophy, and other humanities disciplines.

Funding Period - The period of time when Federal funds are available for obligation by a state council. Under a triennial proposal, there are three consecutive one-year funding periods within a five-year grant period.

General Grant Provisions for State Humanities Councils - A compendium of the administrative requirements that apply to state councils regarding their grant from NEH as well as their own regrants.

Gift-and-Match - A gift refers to non-federal, third-party money that is received by a council or regrantee. Matching refers to the federal funds released to a council when the gift is certified to NEH. (See Indefinite Funds.)

Grant - An award of federal funds from NEH. (See “Regrant”.)

Grant Period - For councils that submit a triennial or biennial proposal, the grant period will run for five years or for four years respectively. Those submitting a triennial proposal will receive supplemental funding in the second and third years of the grant period while those that submit a biennial proposal will receive just one year of supplemental funding. Obligations cannot be incurred prior to the beginning date or after the ending date of the grant period. Councils will have two years following the last funding period to close out the grant.

Humanities - Defined by Congress as including (but not necessarily limited to) the study of the following disciplines: history; philosophy; languages; linguistics; literature; archaeology; jurisprudence; the history, theory, and criticism of the arts; ethics, comparative religion; and those aspects of the social sciences that employ historical or philosophical approaches.

In-Kind Cost Share - Cost sharing by a third party that does not directly involve cash but equivalent donated resources or facilities. For instance, a local museum may allow a project to take place in its auditorium without charging its usual fee. The amount of that normal fee can be used as an in-kind cost-share contribution for that regrant.

Indefinite Funds - Also known as Treasury Funds, this is an offer of funds to a state council which will be released only if matched by third-party gifts. Treasury funds are released by the government after the state council certifies to NEH’s satisfaction that the eligible gifts have been received either by the council or its regrantee. (See also Gift-and-Match.)

Interim Progress Report - A report submitted to NEH twelve (or eighteen) months following the submission of a biennial (or triennial) proposal. Interim reports are not normally reviewed by outside evaluators.

Jefferson Lecture - The Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities was established by NEH in 1972 to honor the intellectual and civic virtues exemplified by Thomas Jefferson. The lecture provides an opportunity for an eminent scholar of the humanities to explore matters of broad concern and is the highest honor conferred by the federal government for distinguished intellectual achievement in the humanities.

Lobbying Activities - Recipients of federal contracts, grants, and loans are prohibited from using appropriated funds to influence federal or state legislation, either directly or through grass-roots lobbying. Any costs associated with lobbying activities will have to be recorded separately in a council’s books to insure that they are not charged to grant funds or to the mandated cost sharing on its NEH awards. In addition, any portion of the state council’s membership dues that are paid to the Federation of State Humanities Councils from NEH grant funds or the council’s mandated cost sharing may not be used to support the Federation’s lobbying activities.

Matching Funds - See Indefinite Funds.

National Program Funds - Definite funds not included in a council's base grant which serve a variety of purposes. Most are allocated to the states as supplements based on population and equal distribution for matching, population supplements, and public meetings. The funds are also used to fund exemplary awards, orientation conferences, the annual chairs and executive directors meeting, and insurance for the councils.

NEH - Acronym for the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency established by Congress in 1965. Applications are received through six divisions within NEH (Education, Fellowships and Seminars, Preservation and Access, Public Programs, Research, and State Programs) and one office (Challenge Grants). The Division of State Programs also incorporates the Office of Outreach which coordinates efforts to insure that citizens are aware of the full range of NEH grant opportunities and provides technical assistance to first-time applicants. NEH issues a periodic publication, *Humanities*, which contains interviews with humanities scholars and articles on humanities topics which often relate to grants awarded by the agency.

Obligations - The cost of orders placed, contracts and subgrants awarded, goods and services received, and similar transactions during a given period that will require payment by a council during the same or a future period.

Orientation Conferences - Meetings held yearly for new members who have attended at least two of their own state council's meetings. New members have the opportunity to meet their colleagues from other state councils, get to know the staff of the Division of State Programs, discuss ways in which councils coordinate and plan their programs, and learn more about the responsibilities of council membership. Normally there is one meeting for western states and one for eastern states.

Panelists - Individuals who participate in peer review of major proposals. They are usually former council members or people familiar with the world of cultural institutions and nonprofit organizations. The comments of panelists are a critical component of the proposal review letter sent from NEH to the state council following the review of the proposal. Normally each state's proposal is read and discussed by up to seven panelists.

Program Officer - A member of the Division of State Programs staff who serves as the liaison to a state council. Each program officer is responsible for working with several state councils, including providing any necessary assistance or information to the councils. Program officers are organized into regional teams whose work is coordinated by **Regional Officers**.

Public Meeting - Since 1985 Congress has required that all state councils conduct public meetings annually in order to receive direct feedback from citizens regarding the councils' programming. In proposals to NEH, the councils are expected to outline how they have responded to these public suggestions and comments in planning their programs.

Reauthorization - By means of this legislation the National Endowment for the Humanities is authorized to function for a stated period of time. At the end of that time, reauthorization hearings are held by Congress to determine whether or not the agency should continue to exist and to set the upper limits of its funding. NEH's enabling legislation is shared by two other federal agencies: The National Endowment for the Arts and the Institute of Museum Services.

Regrant - The mechanism through which a council awards its grant funds to non-profit organizations within its state. Also used to refer to these funds in general. The term reflects the fact that awards made by a council come out of grant funds received from NEH. Councils are authorized to award regrants to private non-profit organizations; institutions of higher education; state, local, and federally recognized Indian tribal governments; groups of persons that form an association to carry out a project; and individuals. Organizations or groups that apply to the councils for funding must be constituted for nonprofit purposes.

RFP - Acronym for Request For Proposals. An RFP is a program development mechanism through which councils can publicly solicit proposals from throughout the state on specified topics, themes, or disciplines.

State Humanities Council - The first six state councils (Georgia, Maine, Missouri, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Wyoming) were initiated by NEH in 1971, and the program became a mandated part of NEH in the reauthorizing legislation in 1976. Although they appear under a variety of names (e.g., council, endowment, commission, committee, forum, and foundation) all councils, as recipients of NEH funds, are nonprofit entities and are charged with making public humanities programs available to people throughout the state, including those who would otherwise not easily have access to them.

Treasury Funds - See Indefinite Funds.

Update - The newsletter issued periodically by the Division of State Programs. *Update* is sent to all current council members and staff and provides news on recent program activity and issues of general interest to the states.

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