Mock Panel Instructions

The idea behind a "mock panel" is to give you some insight into the NEH peer review system. We will ask several volunteers to read this application in advance of the mock panel and then engage in a discussion of its merits. We will also ask members of the audience to chime in with their opinions.

These are actual applications that were submitted to the NEH’s Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant program. The applicants were kind enough to allow us to share it with you as a sample. In the interest of brevity, some portions of the application have been removed, like the cover sheet, budget, resumes, and letters of support. Note: as these are older applications, their format will not necessarily conform to the more recent set of grant guidelines. Please visit the website for current guidelines.

To perform your review, please read the "Program Description" and "Evaluation Criteria" below. Then read the application.

Program Description

The NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant program is designed to help spur the creation of new, innovative, humanities projects, tools, and programs that utilize or study the impact of digital technology.

Digital Humanities Start-Up Grants may involve

- research that brings new approaches or documents best practices in the study of the digital humanities;
- planning and developing prototypes of new digital tools for preserving, analyzing, and making accessible digital resources, including libraries’ and museums’ digital assets;
- scholarship that examines the philosophical implications and impact of the use of emerging technologies;
- innovative uses of technology for public programming and education utilizing both traditional and new media; and
- new digital modes of publication that facilitate the dissemination of humanities scholarship in advanced academic as well as informal or formal educational settings at all academic levels.

Innovation is a hallmark of this grant category. All applicants must propose an innovative approach, method, tool, or idea that has not been used before in the humanities. These grants are modeled, in part, on the “high risk/high reward” paradigm often used by funding agencies in the sciences. NEH is requesting proposals for projects that take some risks in the pursuit of innovation and excellence. Digital Humanities Start-Up Grants should result in plans, prototypes, or proofs of concept for long-term digital humanities projects prior to implementation.

There are two different pools of applications – Level I and Level II. Applicants are asked to specifically request one of two levels:

LEVEL I START-UP: Awards of $5000 - $25,000. These are small grants designed to fund brainstorming sessions, basic research, workshops, early alpha-level prototypes or proofs-of-concept, and initial planning. The narrative for Level I applications is limited to three single-spaced pages.

LEVEL II START-UP: Awards of $25,001 - $50,000. These are larger grants that can be used for more fully-formed projects that are ready to start the first stage of implementation or the creation of working prototypes. The narrative for Level II applications is limited to six single-spaced pages.
Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation of the application will take into account both the activities proposed for the start-up project and the long-term project goals.

Evaluators are asked to apply the following criteria:

1. The intellectual significance of the project for the humanities, including its potential to enhance research, teaching and learning in the humanities.

2. The likelihood that the project will stimulate new research of value to scholars and general audiences in the humanities, or use new digital technologies to communicate humanities scholarship to broad audiences.

3. The quality of innovation in terms of the idea, approach, method, or digital technology, and the appropriateness of the technology employed in the project.

4. The quality of the conception, definition, organization, and description of the project and the applicant’s clarity of expression.

5. The feasibility of the plan of work, including whether the start-up activities will significantly contribute to the project’s long-term goals.

6. The qualifications, expertise, and levels of commitment of the project director and key project staff or contributors.

We have 5 possible ratings: E (Excellent), VG (Very Good), G (Good), SM (Some Merit) and NC (Not Competitive).