The National Endowment for the Humanities

National Humanities Alliance
The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) was established in 1965 in recognition of the unique role the humanities play in fostering the wisdom, vision, and knowledge required to participate in a thriving democracy. To this day, the NEH is the only entity, federal or otherwise, charged with bringing the humanities to all Americans.

With divisions dedicated to Education, Preservation and Access, Public Programs, Challenge Programs, and Digital Humanities, the NEH protects our cultural heritage, supports lifelong learning, and fosters civic education. Through direct grants and partnerships with the state humanities councils, the agency reaches Americans in every congressional district.
Here, we offer examples of four of the crucial impacts the NEH has on our educational and cultural landscape: supporting K–12 education, reaching rural communities, serving veterans, and saving our cultural heritage in the face of disaster. These impact areas are illustrated through select NEH-funded programs, each representing a broader body of extraordinary work carried out by humanities communities across the country with the support of the NEH.

To learn more about select NEH-funded projects in your state, visit NEHforAll.org.
The NEH supports professional development opportunities for K–12 teachers across the country.

- Nationally, summer institutes and seminars for K–12 educators provide teachers with a deeper understanding of history and culture while helping them develop new teaching methods. In the past five years alone, these programs have reached more than 11,000 teachers, ultimately enriching the classroom experience for an estimated 2 million students.

- NEH summer programs bring teachers from across the country together, bridging regional divides and building support networks that span the nation. In a 2019 survey of 14 NEH summer programs, 97 percent of K–12 educator respondents felt it was either “absolutely essential” or “very important” for educators from around the country to gather in a temporary community in one place. 98 percent would recommend participating in their particular or another NEH workshop to a colleague.

- The Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville, New York, and the Brooklyn Historical Society developed Created Equal: Image, Sound, Story, a program that trains teachers to combine history and media, encouraging students to think about history in the context of contemporary social movements. The program was launched in high-needs Brooklyn middle schools, and the curriculum is now freely available for teachers throughout the United States.

I left the institute feeling deeply grateful and yet also responsible to share this work with others as it was such a powerful and humbling experience. [...] I feel so heartened by the educators around me and their knowledge and commitment to our students, our history, and this country.”

— SURVEY RESPONDENT,
Slavery in the Colonial North
The NEH helps teachers bring high-quality humanities learning to their classrooms.

- With more than 2 million unique visitors per year, the NEH’s educational website, EDSITEment makes lesson plans and digital resources developed from NEH-funded projects accessible to K–12 teachers.
- National History Day, an NEH initiative, encourages meaningful history and civics engagement for 600,000 students and 20,000–30,000 teachers per year in each state and territory. A 2011 study showed that these students outperformed their peers on state standardized tests.

The NEH ensures that students from all backgrounds have access to high-quality extracurricular programs.

- In Louisville, Kentucky, the Cultural Pass Program distributes free passes to the city’s art and cultural institutions to youth. An NEH grant is ensuring access for all Louisville youth, helping the city overcome economic and cultural barriers to participating in the program. In 2017, the city provided 1,000 free bus rides as part of the program and 42 percent of the cultural passes go to children in low-to-moderate income zip codes.
- Through the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute’s Legacy Youth Leadership program, high school students have the opportunity to train as docents and learn more about both Civil Rights history and the museum field. With NEH funding, BCRI is expanding its one-year program to two years, incorporating college-application counseling, and offering stipends to participants.

Since 2009, teachers from across the nation have traveled to Mississippi, where they take part in The Most Southern Place on Earth: Music, Culture, and History of the Mississippi Delta. The one-week program, hosted by the Delta Center for Learning and Culture at Delta State University, offers teachers new perspectives on Civil Rights history as well as the region’s food, music, and people.

In a 2019 survey of past participants:

- 100% said that Most Southern helped them grow as an educator, with 43% indicating “transformative growth” and 51% indicating “significant growth.”
- Over 90% of respondents provided specific examples of how they had implemented content acquired through the workshop in their classrooms.
- 72% said the workshop led them to pursue additional education or professional development opportunities.
Providing Humanities Access to All Americans

From groundbreaking documentaries and exhibitions, to community conversations, heritage festivals, and early literacy programs, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) supports projects that bring the humanities to Americans in small rural towns and large cities alike.

The NEH supports innovative exhibitions at cultural institutions throughout the United States.

- From 2015–2019, more than 355 cities and towns throughout the United States showcased NEH-funded exhibitions and historic site interpretations—many more than once.

- Exhibitions like *Farm Life: A Century of Change for Farm Families and Their Neighbors* at the Chippewa Valley Museum in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, showcase local histories within the context of national perspectives—in this case putting local farmers’ experiences in conversation with the history of American agriculture. Temporary exhibitions like *Leonard Bernstein: The Power of Music*, developed by the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, provide new perspectives on iconic American figures and events in American history—these exhibitions often travel to other locations, bringing large audiences to host institutions.

- *NEH on the Road* ensures that the best of NEH-funded exhibitions reach all parts of the country. *NEH on the Road* exhibitions have traveled to more than 300 communities, reaching more than 2.3 million adults and children.

“*NEH funding* has allowed us to do projects that we would not have been able to do locally... We simply cannot do them on our operating budget.”

— CARRIE RONDANDER, Chippewa Valley Museum
The NEH supports the production of world-class documentaries, ensuring access to new perspectives on our history and culture.

- NEH-funded films include Ken Burns’s *The Civil War* and *The Vietnam War*, the *Created Equal* film series, *Hillbilly*, and *Shakespeare Uncovered*.

- NEH funding ensures that Americans have access to high-quality educational television and film, regardless of their annual incomes. These documentaries are screened on local PBS stations and used in school classrooms throughout the country—often alongside NEH-supported curricula. Many are available on streaming devices, including through Kanopy, which provides free access to library cardholders.

The NEH brings facilitated conversations, lectures, panels, and other programs to communities throughout the United States.

- With an NEH grant for *Revisiting the Founding Era*, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is bringing discussion groups, lectures, and resources to more than 100 rural libraries. And through funding for *States of Incarceration: A National Dialogue of Local Histories*, the Humanities Action Lab is inviting communities throughout the United States to contribute their perspectives on incarceration to a traveling exhibition and conversation project.

- NEH funding helped WETA promote public programming related to *The Vietnam War* throughout the United States. Eighty-one programming grants to local stations from Conway, Arkansas, to Anchorage, Alaska, supported public screenings, panels, lectures, oral history collecting, exhibitions, and writing and art projects. Seventy-five percent of respondents to a participant survey, collected from multiple programs, indicated that they “increased their knowledge of the Vietnam War.”

The NEH supports programs for rural and at-risk youth, ensuring that they have the tools to succeed in school and in life.

- NEH funding has helped the American Library Association support programs at more than 1,800 libraries over the past six years. One of these programs, *Great Stories Club*, brings reading and discussion programs to at-risk youth throughout the country, including youth in juvenile detention centers.

- With funding from the NEH, the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities brings PRIME TIME Family Reading programs to children and their guardians in rural Louisiana and in Kentucky, Nebraska, Georgia, and Michigan. Since it was founded, PRIME TIME programs have been hosted in 40 states, serving more than 40,000 families in communities with high-needs schools.

Of the 48 NEH-funded documentary films completed between 2012 and 2018, 47 received nationwide distribution. Thirty-six were broadcast on the national PBS schedule, while an additional eight were distributed to local PBS stations through services like PBS Plus and American Public Television.
Serving Veterans Across the Country

Through *Dialogues on the Experience of War*, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) brings together veterans and civilians to reflect upon powerful literature and art. The NEH has funded 62 *Dialogues* programs in 26 states and the District of Columbia. Many of these involve multiple sites, further extending the program’s impact and reaching underserved communities.

“For forty years I have been looking for words to describe my experience and I finally found them right here in this ancient book [*The Odyssey*].”

— VETERAN PARTICIPANT

*Dialogues* programs help veterans gain new insight into their military experience by engaging rich humanities resources.

- Veterans bond through collective reflection around novels, memoirs, poetry, art, music, and films that illuminate common patterns of deployment and homecoming across centuries, continents, and cultures.
- In a survey across five programs, 96 percent of participants indicated that the humanities materials helped them better understand their experiences.
Dialogues programs help veterans combat isolation and form networks of support.
- Respondents to the 2017 Wounded Warrior Project survey reported significantly higher levels of social isolation than the general population.
- In a survey of five programs, 100 percent of respondents reported a desire to “keep in touch with some of the people [they] met through the program.”

Dialogues programs meaningfully bridge the divide between veterans and their communities.
- Plays, lectures, and panels foster deeper understanding of veterans’ experiences.
- At public programs held by Ohio University, 85 percent of respondents agreed that the “program gave [them] opportunities to see connections between those who have served and those who have not.” Ninety-seven percent felt “more confident about taking part in thoughtful discussions about war.”

Dialogues programs reach underserved veterans.
- Programs hosted by the Clemente Course have reached female veterans and veterans experiencing homelessness.
- Auburn University’s program reached rural communities and imprisoned veterans.

“The support I received from staff and classmates when I was having a hard time allowed me to know it was OK and not keep on shutting down and shutting out.”
- Veteran Participant

“As someone who has never been involved in the armed forces, I think it was important to see this play/hear these stories to ‘understand’ these struggles better.”
- Public Program Participant

79% of survey respondents agreed that their Dialogues program made them “more likely to ask for help if [they] need it.”
Cultural heritage items, from presidential letters and great works of art to community archives, are vulnerable to a wide range of natural and man-made disasters, among them hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, and floods. Whether providing emergency grants to affected cultural institutions or supporting emergency training and conservation education, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) works to ensure these items are preserved for generations to come.

The NEH provides emergency grants to institutions in regions affected by large-scale national disasters.

- Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, the NEH awarded more than $2 million in emergency relief to cultural institutions in the region. NEH funding moved works of art owned by the New Orleans Museum of Art into safe storage; preserved more than 46,000 photographs documenting the history of the Gulf South; and salvaged documents and artifacts from Jefferson Davis’s home, Beauvoir, which sustained extreme damage during the storm.

- Following Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in 2017, the NEH awarded nearly $2 million to organizations throughout the Gulf South and Puerto Rico. Funding preserved a John Biggers mural housed by the Blue Triangle Multi-Cultural Association in Texas and salvaged water-damaged architectural features at Vizcaya, an estate and museum in Florida.

The NEH supports educational programs that help staff at cultural institutions prepare for disasters.

- With regional partners like the Midwest Art Conservation Center, the Northeast Document Conservation Center, and the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts, the NEH ensures that staff from small organizations throughout the United States can undertake emergency preparedness and conservation training.
NEH grants help organizations like the Comanche National Museum and Cultural Center in Oklahoma and the Museum of Nebraska Art create their own emergency response plans, train their staffs, and purchase supplies. They fund systems updates that help prevent damage in the face of natural disasters: the University of Montana is using an NEH grant to ensure its HVAC systems can manage smoke particulates, a direct response to the increasing threat of wildfires.

NEH-funded resources such as the Field Guide to Emergency Readiness and Response, the Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel, and water remediation instruction videos are widely used by cultural heritage professionals throughout the world.

The NEH supports professional networks in areas prone to disaster, establishing the infrastructure necessary for effective disaster response.

With the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (FAIC), the NEH supports the Alliance for Response: 28 community networks, from Seattle to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, that build cooperative partnerships and ensure that vulnerable regions are prepared for disasters before they happen.

The Texas Alliance for Response (TX-CERA) was instrumental in Houston’s recovery following Hurricane Harvey in 2017—and then traveled to Florida to support cultural institutions affected by Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

Through grants to graduate programs, the NEH has fostered the research that now makes it possible to salvage and recover both personal possessions and national treasures.

NEH support of the Winterthur/University of Delaware Graduate Program in Art Conservation has advanced conservation research over the past three decades. As a product of this work, preservation professionals better understand how to treat mold, water, and fire damage. This knowledge has immediate, practical value for individual people in addition to cultural organizations, as students in the programs have helped salvage photographs from floods in Wimberly, Texas, and a tragic house fire in Columbus, Ohio, as part of their training.
THE NATIONAL HUMANITIES ALLIANCE (NHA) is a nationwide coalition of organizations advocating for the humanities on campuses, in communities, and on Capitol Hill. Founded in 1981, NHA is supported by over 200 member organizations, including: colleges, universities, libraries, museums, cultural organizations, state humanities councils, and scholarly, professional, and higher education associations. It is the only organization that brings together the U.S. humanities community as a whole.