

Funding for the Humanities & Humanities-Related Social Sciences

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Academic Research Funding
Strategies, LLC

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<http://bit.ly/WMich-Humanities>

Dr. Katherine E. Kelly

Assoc. Prof. of English, retired

- Edited and wrote copy > 10 years
- Taught writing/research to university students > 30 years
- Won grants from American Council of Learned Societies, NEH, Harry Ransom Center-UT Austin; South Central MLA, Texas A&M University
- Editor of “Research Development and Grant Writing News”
- Scholarship: British Drama and Theatre; British Suffrage

Overview

- Benefits of funding
- Establish research agenda
- Locate & select funders
- Learn funder's mission & culture
- Write competitive proposal
- Interpret reviews rationally

Funding Benefits

- Grant writing
 - achieves project clarity
 - provides paid time off
 - improves scholarly skills
 - enhances promotion/tenure
 - creates career pathway

Peer Writing Group

- Share drafts/receive critiques
- Diverse members
- Method
 - Group reviews drafts
 - Confidential
 - Set Writing deadlines
- Example:
<https://facultywrite.duke.edu/writing-groups>

Do Awards Matter?

- Audiences
 - Provost
 - Dean
 - Department Head
 - Colleagues
 - Graduate Students
 - Moi!

Awards that Influence University Ranking

- The Center for Measuring University Performance and the Assoc. of American Universities (AAU) use awards from below to rank universities
 - ACLS Fellowships
 - Fulbright American Scholars
 - Getty Scholars in Residence (advanced scholars)
 - Guggenheim Fellows (midcareer)
 - MacArthur Foundation Fellows
 - Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Distinguished Ach. Award
 - National Endowment for the Humanities Fellows
 - National Humanities Center Fellows
 - Newberry Library Long-term Fellows
 - Robert Wood Johnson (Health) Policy Fellows
 - Searle Scholars (beginning asst. profs.)
 - Woodrow Wilson Fellows
 - American Academy in Rome
 - American Academy of Arts and Sciences
 - American Antiquarian Society Fellowships
 - American School of Classical Studies in Athens
 - National Academy of Education
 - Nobel Prize
 - Residency at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts
 - Residency at the Institute for Advanced Study

Establish Research Agenda

- Department's funding expectations?
- Long-term vs short-term goals
- Build line(s) of scholarship (specialty)
- Join scholarly writing group

Create Funding Schedule and Timeline

- Timeline elements:
 - tenure/promotion deadlines
 - CFPs with deadlines
 - proposal drafting time
- Revise continuously

Example: Beginning Asst. Prof. Timeline

- Year 1 (1-2 Course release per semester?)
 - Fall semester
 - Revise Dissertation Chapters 3-5
 - Interview senior colleagues re funding
 - Locate Potential publisher(s)
 - Spring semester
 - Book proposal to publisher
 - Apply for internal & external funding
 - Summer
 - Complete book; send for review
 - Research funding sources
 - Sketch out series of articles = start of book #2
 - NEH Summer Stipend deadline: late Sept.

Locate & Select Funders: Federal Funding

- Primary federal funders for HSS: NEH and NSF
- Benefits:
 - High regard/reward
 - Stable programs & procedures
 - Applications resemble others
 - NEH welcomes the newcomer

Privates and Nonprofits

- Collective projects
 - Arts and cultural institutions
 - University programs
- Individual scholarly and creative work via other agencies (e.g. ACLS < Carnegie, Mellon etc.)
- Apply to both kinds

Federal Agencies vs Private Foundations

- Federal Agency
 - Stable \$
 - Pres. Appointee & fed regs
 - Established deadlines
 - Wide range projects
 - Program officer does not find or solicit applicants
 - Established rev criteria; transparent rev process
- Foundation
 - Dynamic funding programs
 - Governed by founder; unique regs
 - Moveable deadlines & processes
 - Narrower range projects
 - Program officer may contact/solicit
 - Review may not be peer
 - Less defined rev criteria

Resources for Funding Search

- Who supports work like yours?
- Search “open” research databases
- Professional Associations
- National funders
- State & Univ.-specific centers
- Colleagues’ recommendations
- Archives
 - Locate archival holdings:
<https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/scrc/archives/usworldwide>
 - Archive Provides Scholar funding?

Funders' Success Rates

- NEH: 6 - 20% funding ratio
- NSF: 20 - 24%
- ACLS: 5.8%
- NB: Ratios Include under-prepared proposals
- Conclusion? Realism & Persistence

Sorting Funders

- Note:
 - Deadlines, criteria
 - What it funds (discipline, method, historical period, etc.)
 - Amount of \$ support
 - Award length of time
 - Residency required?
 - Targeted to junior, mid-level, senior researcher?
 - Departmental preference?
 - Prestige

NEH vs. NSF* vs. University Funding

- Largest external HSS funders: NEH, NSF
- In 2015, internal (university) HSS funding > federal funding
- Typically, SBE funding > Humanities funding

* SBE = Directorate for the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences

Likely HSS Funders

- H: foundations & nonprofits
- SS: federal \$ nearly = foundations and nonprofits
- Therefore, diversify!

Foundations and Non-Profits

- For an exhaustive, annotated list of non-profits and foundations offering scholarly support, go to The William & Mary Sponsored Programs site:
<https://www.wm.edu/offices/sponsoredprograms/funding/humanities/index.php>

Some sample non-profits and foundations:

Institute of Advanced Study
American Assoc. of University Women
American Council of Learned Societies
The American Philosophical Society
The National Archives
Dumbarton Oaks Library
Folger Shakespeare Library
Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowships
John Simon Guggenheim Foundation
The Huntington Library, etc. etc.

Funding Trends

- Interdisciplinary trending, esp. in sciences
- Crises benefit from multiple disciplines: climate, migration, income disparity, pandemic
E.g.: “Oceanic humanities”; “Environmental humanities”

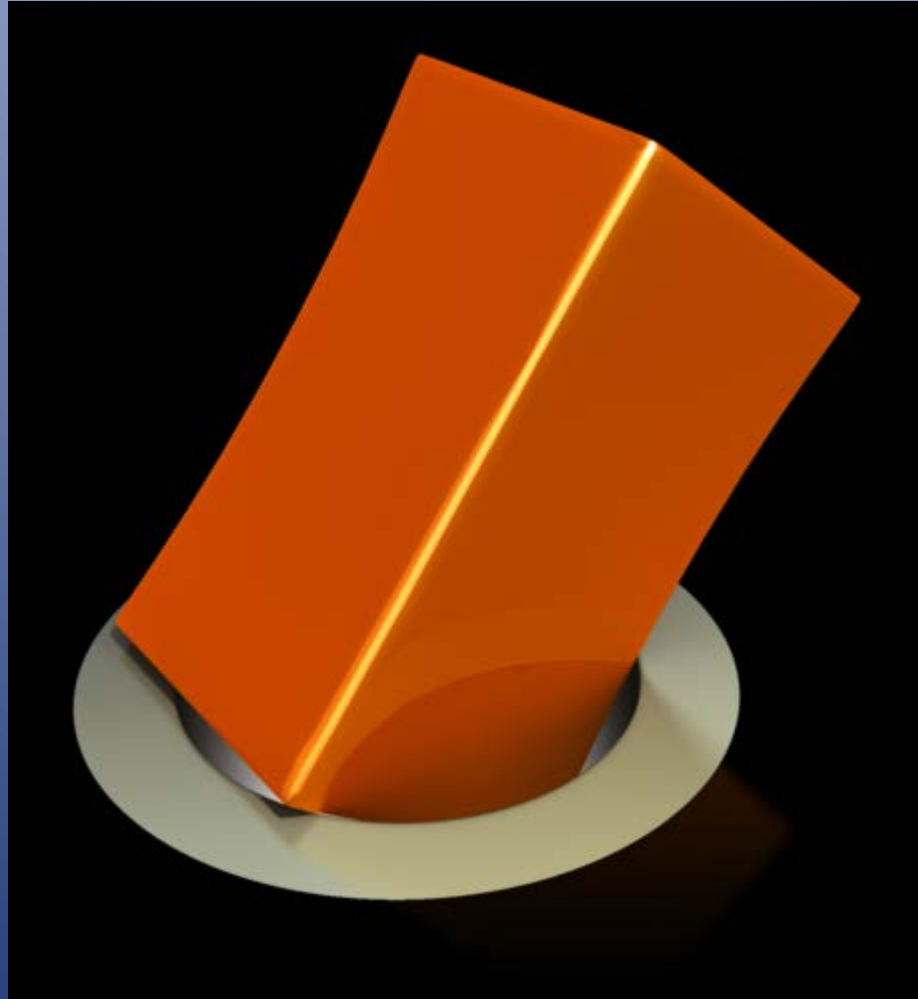
Funding for Individual Research

- NEH
 - Mellon Fellowships for digital publication
 - Summer stipends
 - Public Scholar program, etc.
- ACLS
 - Digital Extension grants
 - Fellowships
 - African Humanities program
 - Frederick Burkhardt Residential Fellowships (recently tenured)

One-Time Opportunities

- NEH “A More Perfect Union” Initiative:
 - Scholarly editions and translations
 - Short documentaries
 - Humanities Discussions
 - Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions
 - <https://www.neh.gov/250>

The Crucial Question of Fit



Learn Funders' Mission and Culture:

- Funder's mission and culture?
- Review successful proposals
- Find best fit

Federal Example: NEH Mission

- The NEH serves and strengthens our nation by supporting high-quality projects and programs in the humanities and by making the humanities available to all Americans
- Keywords: serves, high-quality, available to all

NEH Culture

- Committed to serve qualified applicants
- Help available at stages
- Examples successful proposals
- Clear criteria
- Applicants may (sometimes) contact Project Directors
- Offer feedback
- Funded proposals on website

Private Example: ACLS Mission

- “Advancement of humanistic studies in all fields of . . . the humanities and social sciences and the . . . strengthening of relations among the national societies devoted to such studies”
- Key words: advancement of studies in all fields; strengthening of relations among (95) societies”

ACLS Culture

- Investigation and reflection about various cultures, texts, and artifacts.
- Humanists study diverse means by which humans . . . in every age and culture explore, etc.
- In sum, open to various nations, objects, methods, time periods

Writing a Competitive Proposal: from Idea to Proposal

- Idea must
 - Appeal to writer and funder
 - Engage current scholarship
 - Be expressed succinctly
 - Be shared/tested with writing group

What Do Funders Want to See?

- Does your proposal
 - Fill a *significant* gap in existing knowledge?
 - Build on knowledge or expose false knowledge?
 - Combine theories, methods, or approaches?
 - Shift a current paradigm?

“So What?”

- Widen implications of research
 - Example: Why is story of late C16th conquest of northern Mexico worth telling?
 - Uncovers new primary materials
 - Conquest influenced long-term racial identity
 - Includes unexpected allies
 - Undocumented genocide
- (Raphael Folsom, “How to Get Grant Money...”)

Begin Literature Review

- Why?
 - Scholarly community
 - Aware of current scholarship
- Neither overstate nor understate proposed contribution

The Role of Theory in the Proposal

- Situate idea in current scholarship, then consider theory
- Theory helps answer “so what” question
- Source: Peter Burke’s *History and Social Theory*

Some Contemporary Theorists

- Some prominent humanities/social science theorists:
 - Michel Foucault (e.g., origins of modern human sciences)
 - Michele Lamont (e.g., social resilience)
 - Joan Scott (e.g., the question of difference in study of history)
 - Eric Hobsbawm (e.g., rise of industrial capitalism, socialism, & nationalism)
 - Richard Delgado (e.g., critical race theory)
 - Pierre Bourdieu (e.g., structures of social worlds)

Writing: Proportion and Balance

- Proposal narrative blends detail (description/data) with large framework (theory)

E.g., Joan W. Scott: “The 200 or so mentions of ‘gender’ in the Program of Action from Beijing* ... are simply substitutes for the word ‘women’.” (2000)

*(23rd Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Women and Gender)

Theory plus Data: Example

- Scott's gender theory: "Gender = social organization of the relationship between the sexes."
- A human construct with a particular history.
- Beijing conference reveals need for new theory of "gender"

Using Theory in Proposal

- Devote +/- one paragraph of proposal introduction to theory
- Invites readers from outside your area into proposal
- Which theorist can help you?

Beginning the Application

- Read guidelines
- Review sample narratives
- Consult review criteria
- Read Frequently Asked Questions
- Contact the Program Staff with questions (check guidelines first)

Study Successful Proposals

- How do they address
 - What will be done
 - Why it should be done
 - How it will be done
 - How it will help funder's mission
 - How results will be shared
 - How success will be measured

NEH Review Criteria

- Significance (“So what?”)
- Quality of applicant as humanities interpreter
- Quality of concept, definition, organization, and description of project and applicant’s clarity of expression (no jargon)

Criteria, contd.

- Feasibility of proposed plan of work
- Likely to complete (during period of performance)

Elements of NEH Proposal

- Narrative—max. 3 pages no smaller than 11 point type
 - Research and contribution
 - Methods and work plan
 - Competencies, skills, access
 - Final product and dissemination

Research and Contribution

- Describe your claim early
- Example--**third paragraph** of NEH Summer Stipend:
- "Writing for the Street, Writing in the Garret" is intended to challenge the street/garret dichotomy (one writes either for a buying public or for oneself) that still exerts a major influence on how we understand literary culture and to show that the apparently paradoxical method of private publication was a reasonable way for Melville and Dickinson to seek influence"

Methods and Work Plan

- Describe method(s).
- Current state of project and part supported by fellowship?
- Describe work plan: what accomplish during fellowship? How will proposed research advance the project?
- If not completed during award period, how/when completed?

Example: Methods & Work Plan

- “My approach features three innovative elements. First, I consistently evaluate for both writers the explanations offered for why each had this strong interest in private publication. Second, I interpret this interest as reflecting a commitment to markets other than those involving commercial print publication. I read Melville's and Dickinson's authorship in light of the theory of cultural production articulated by Pierre Bourdieu (THE FIELD OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION) and John Guillory (CULTURAL CAPITAL), according to which cultural artifacts are produced and sanctified (Bourdieu's term) by systems whose purpose is not simply and at times not at all to earn economic capital. Third . . .”

Elements of Proposal: Competencies, Skills, and Access

- Qualifications? Skills? Background?
- New area of inquiry?
- Language or digital technology needed?
Qualifications?
- Study location & materials
- Archival or institutional access?

Elements of Proposal: Final Product and Dissemination

- Intended audience and results?
- How & why disseminate results?

Bibliography, Resume, Writing Sample

- Follow guidelines closely
- Guidance for selecting writing sample
- Proofread all carefully

Improve Grant-Writing Skills: Become an NEH Reviewer

- NEH needs panelists
- Various career stages, regions, subfields and specialties
- Approximately 50% of panelists prior experience/funding
- Go to <https://securegrants.neh.gov/signup/>

How Interpret Reviews?

- Assume reviewers fair & competent
- If rejected
 - Read comments
 - Strengths & weaknesses?
 - ?Request PO interview for more info?
 - Revise, resubmit

Sources for More Information

- Peter Burke. *History and Social Theory*. 2nd. Ed. Ithaca: Cornell U P. 1993.
- Raphael Folsom. *How to Get Grant Money in the Humanities and Social Sciences*. New Haven: Yale U P. 2019.
- Michele Lamont. *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment*. Cambridge: Harvard U P. 2009.
- Barbara L. E. Walker & Holly E. Unruh. *Funding Your Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences: a Practical Guide to Grant and Fellowship Proposals*. New York: Routledge. 2018.