

**SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES
GRANT STREAMLINING AND SIMPLIFICATION ACTIVITIES
May, 2001 Through May, 2002**

The National Endowment for the Humanities is pleased to report its accomplishments in streamlining its internal grant application and administration procedures and in improving services to applicants and grantees.

I. Improving the Effectiveness and Performance of NEH Grant Programs

The National Endowment for the Humanities continually works to improve the effectiveness and performance of its grant programs through staff evaluations and the solicitation of advice about procedures and guidelines from the humanities practitioners who serve as panelists in the agency's merit review process. In addition, the Endowment solicited public comment on its grant application and administration procedures through a survey on its website. Comments received in response to this survey were factored into this year's assessment of our procedures.

The Endowment has just inaugurated its new Grants Management System (GMS), a relational database that replaces a Wang mainframe computer. The GMS was designed by the program and grants management staffs to meet the specific requirements of our diverse grant programs. The system will provide easy access to information on grants and applications, while also enhancing our capacity to accept and process application and grant documents online. Staff members, for example, can now search for any application or panelist using a wide variety of criteria, make an award, track gifts and matching amounts for an existing award, and track reports due for current grants. The GMS easily interfaces with the web and other databases. Hence it has facilitated our ability to move towards e-government.

II. Simplifying the Grant Application and Reporting Process

Building on the experience of the previous year, during which NEH completed seven e-government grant projects aimed at simplifying the application process, we have completed two more projects. This past winter, we conducted our Summer Interns grant competition online for the second year in a row. We are pleased to report that the system has made applying so much easier that we have witnessed a quadrupling in the number of applicants in only two years. In August, we launched our largest e-grant competition thus far, our Summer Stipends program. This program typically receives over 800 applications on paper. In the past, the applicant had to fill out not only our application form on paper, but also supply numerous other paper documents, including a narrative, a resume, and a bibliography. But with our online system, the citizen can now easily log in to our website and then compose and submit the entire application on the web. Once the applications are received, the peer review process will be handled via a secure web connection.

Over the course of the next year, we will be working towards adding our remaining grant programs to the web.

III. Improving the Delivery of Services to the Public

The Endowment redesigned its website this year to make it easier for users to find information. Grant program announcements are also being revised in keeping with the advice offered by the Federal Grant Streamlining Program Interagency Pre-Award Working Group, on which the Endowment has a representative. The working group has devised a government-wide standard format for federal grant opportunity announcements. The format was designed to address concerns expressed by the public in comments they submitted in accordance with the procedures specified in Public Law 106-107. The preliminary steps taken this year to adapt our guidelines to this new format will facilitate the final conversion when the new format goes into effect across the government.

The Endowment's progress toward online applications, described above, is making it increasingly easier for the public to take advantage of funding opportunities the NEH provides.

IV. Facilitating Greater Communication among those Responsible for Delivering Services

The National Endowment for the Humanities is actively participating in all facets of the new HHS-sponsored E-Grants project and in several other inter-agency groups, such as the Federal Grant Streamlining Program Interagency Pre-Award and Post-Award Working Groups, the E-Grants Stakeholders group, the Grants Management Committee, the Grants Network (an informal group of grants managers from several grant making agencies), and the Interagency Electronic Grants Committee. Involvement in these groups allows us to stay informed and find additional opportunities to participate in streamlining activities. In anticipation of the success of the E-Grants project we have designed all of our internal grants processing IT systems to be "open" so that they can be interfaced with the new portal system being developed by the E-Grants team.

To facilitate communication internally, the Endowment has reorganized its clearance procedure for grant program guidelines and application instructions. The roster of clearing officers now includes the Endowment's two representatives to the Federal Grant Streamlining Program Interagency Working Groups. As a result, all affected NEH offices can be informed of any developments in the government-wide simplification and streamlining efforts.

NEH's new Grants Management System has also made it easier for staff in the various program divisions to share information about grants and potential panelists and reviewers.