



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

**Humanities**

FIFTY YEARS

**FEDERAL/STATE PARTNERSHIP**

A HANDBOOK

FOR NEW BOARD MEMBERS OF STATE HUMANITIES COUNCILS

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Dear Colleague:

You are a part of a small cadre of individuals who serve a multifaceted organization that is simultaneously local and national in scope. This is a position of great privilege and responsibility. Each board member contributes to the collective reservoir of talent available to the Council, and your tenure on the board will likely be an experience like no other, regardless of how varied your background and training.

As a board member you are tasked with marshaling your personal talents for leadership and vision for the good of an organization with its own history and direction. Councils work with a variety of groups and organizations, therefore it is useful for board members to be knowledgeable about the state's broader cultural and institutional context. As a representative for the Council within your state your service will likely include attending funded programs, speaking to the public, overseeing or planning the Council's work, financial oversight, and representing the Council at state and national meetings.

NEH Federal/State Partnership thanks you for your dedication, commitment, and service to the humanities and we hope this handbook helps orient or reacquaint you with NEH and your role as board member of a state humanities council. We encourage you to visit our website and learn more about the work of this office and other state councils. We also hope you will subscribe, suggest and submit stories for our e-newsletter and website. We look forward to working with you over the next few years and extend our sincerest welcome!

Federal/State Partnership Staff

## **Responsibilities of the Position**

Each Council oversees the expenditure of taxpayer's 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, maintaining and promoting strong programs, and acting as a bridge between scholars and the public. We encourage you to acquaint yourselves with the rules set by NEH and the Council itself. This will assist you in making sure your Council's programs are responsive to the citizens of the state, undergoing evaluation, incorporating new visions, guaranteeing that working relationships with the staff are strong and cordial, committees are functioning according to plan, and that time is used wisely at the board meetings. Your adherence to these safeguards will ensure that your Council continues to strengthen the intellectual life of the state, shape public education, and engage the public in understanding the relationship and relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of our shared life.

## **Board Expectations**

An essential function of the board is building a solid working relationship with the executive director and staff. The board and the executive director must know the responsibilities of each office and how they are complementary and divergent. The executive director is the person who maintains the daily operations and programs of the Council and its staff and who is responsible for ordinary communications with NEH.

Frequent ongoing communication is essential in the development of a healthy professional relationship between the executive director, chairman, executive committee and other members of the board. The key is finding the right combination of human and institutional resources to move the Council forward. Because staff tenures usually exceed those of most board members and they are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organization, solid board/staff relations are essential to success.

State humanities council boards are expected to:

- support the Council's executive director
- set goals and conduct long-range planning (strategic planning)
- conduct overall program evaluation
- create and sign board ethics and conflict of interest policies
- participate in board development and evaluation
- broaden constituencies
- fundraise
- respond to suggestions raised in public meetings
- actively participate in the NEH self-assessment process

- ensure compliance with NEH regulations

### **What Federal/State Partnership needs from Councils:**

- Name and full contact information for the board chair, the legal representative of the Council
- Names and mailing addresses for each board member
- Minutes of each board meeting as soon as they have been approved
- Electronic and print newsletters and other council-generated materials
- Assistance in distributing NEH materials including grant opportunities, award nominations, public events and projects

### **Key dates for each Council to remember:**

- **June 1:** annual compliance plans are due
- Self-assessment reports and site visit take place every five years
- Interim narrative reports, due **June 1** in the third year after the site visit  
The interim narrative report outlines what has happened with a council in the years since the site visit. It also provides opportunity for reaction to the observations and recommendations made by the site visitors in their report.

**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 humanities work through programs administered by eight divisions and offices: Bridging Cultures, Challenge Grants, Digital Humanities, Education, Federal/State Partnership, Preservation and Access, Public, and Research.

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. Although NEH provides a broad mandate to:

- strengthen teaching and learning in schools and colleges
- facilitate research and original scholarship
- provide opportunities for lifelong learning
- preserve and provide access to cultural and educational resources, and
- strengthen the institutional base of the humanities

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. Councils make public humanities programs available to all citizens, including those with limited accessibility. Depending on the state's demography, this might include small rural communities, urban neighborhoods, or certain segments of the state's population, such as older adults or various ethnic groups.

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 expanded their audiences to include teachers and students, newly literate adults, prison inmates, senior citizens, veterans, and other groups.

**Federal/State Partnership** serves as the liaison between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the nonprofit network of 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils. By congressional mandate, the National Endowment for the Humanities provides general operating support grants to the 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils. Federal/State Partnership is the NEH office designated to work with the Councils. The Councils are Federal/State Partnership's sole grantees.

Through Federal/State Partnership, Councils receive annual grants, which are made in accordance with the legislated funding formula, to develop and carry out programs at the local level. The partnership of NEH and the state humanities councils is specifically designed to help the Endowment realize its mission to promote knowledge of human history, thought, and culture, and to enhance the role of the humanities in public life. This partnership makes humanities education and lifelong learning readily available at the local level, uniquely tailored to local interests and needs, and drawing upon local resources and experiences.

### **The core work of Federal/State Partnership**

Federal/State Partnership oversees the Councils' congressionally appropriated general operating support grants, carries out on-site consultations and review, offers Councils general liability insurance, and maintains network-wide communication. Its staff reads council board minutes, newsletters, and other publications; keeps up with councils' activities on the web and social media; and tracks trends and ideas in the broad nonprofit and grantmaking worlds. Federal/State Partnership encourages Councils to produce and support splendid humanities programming, to serve as models of excellent nonprofit management, to maintain open communication, mutual support, and shared goals with NEH and other Councils, and to exercise responsible and impeccable stewardship of public—and all—funds entrusted to them.

In addition to representing the interests of the state humanities councils within NEH, Federal/State Partnership staff works with each Council to ensure compliance with legislative requirements by collecting data on programs, attendance, board composition and governance. Staff also assists Councils in conducting regular evaluations of their programming and operations. This self-assessment process fulfills the legislative requirement that Councils have a plan of work approved by NEH. Federal/State Partnership also seeks opportunities to broaden the horizons of NEH and the Councils by cultivating contacts with the business, independent, educational, and governmental sectors.

## **Key Staff Descriptions, Biographies and Contact Information Federal/State Partnership**

LEONDRA BURCHALL, **Program Officer** (lburchall@neh.gov, 202.606.2324). Leondra joined Federal/State Partnership in 2014. She has extensive public history experience and comes from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities where she was Director of African American Programs and Virginia Africana: The Network of Museum, History & Preservation Professionals. Leondra began her professional career as an oral historian with the National Museum of Bermuda and moved into the field of heritage education in 2005 as Director of Education of The St. George's Foundation, Bermuda. She has also worked as a consultant and researcher with the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture and as a lecturer at Northern Virginia Community College. Leondra has published articles on oral and public history and is interested in academic and community history collaboration.

MEG FERRIS McREYNOLDS, **Program Officer** (mferris@neh.gov, 202.208.7100). Meg joined the staff of NEH and Federal/State Partnership in August 2010. Prior to joining NEH, she worked at the National Gallery of Art in the department of Exhibition Programs, assisting in the production of educational materials for special exhibitions. She received a Masters degree in Art History from American University and a Bachelors degree in Art/Art History and French from Goucher College. While at American University Meg wrote two qualifying papers: one a study of Alphonse Mucha's posters of Sarah Bernhardt, the other an overview of Frida Kahlo's self-portraiture. She also has co-curated two art exhibitions: "The (Real) Art World" at the American University Museum and "Hand-Made" at the Mansion at Strathmore in conjunction with the Washington Sculptors Group. Meg is currently working toward an MLS degree with a specialization in Archives at the University of Maryland, College Park.

SHIRLEY NEWMAN, **Program Assistant** (snewman@neh.gov, 202.606.8254). Shirley has been at NEH since 1985 and with Federal/State Partnership since 1997. She is the phone voice of the office and a key staffer, involved in all program activities. Shirley manages board member lists, updates to council contact information, and organizes all council publications and materials submitted to the office. Before joining Federal/State Partnership, Shirley worked with the museums program in the Division of Public Programs. Before coming to NEH, she worked at the Census Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission.

### **Office of the Inspector General (OIG)**

The Office of Inspector General provides independent oversight of the NEH programs and operations. The office is responsible for promoting efficiency and effectiveness in NEH programs and for preventing and detecting fraud, waste, and abuse. The OIG has performed accounting system surveys at all of the state humanities councils to determine the adequacy of a Council's accounting systems



and management controls designed to administer federal funds. In 1984, the audit office issued an accounting system manual to assist the Councils in correcting weaknesses identified. Since its issuance, the Accounting System Manual for State Humanities Councils has been revised three times (1994, 2009 and 2013/4). During the past several years, the OIG has performed quality reviews of audits performed by the Councils' independent public accountants (IPA) in accordance with OMB Circular A-133. In addition, the OIG staff provides audit and accounting guidance to the state councils.

**LAURA DAVIS, Inspector General** (ldavis@neh.gov, 202.606.8574). Laura has been a professional in the Federal audit community for 29 years. She has worked for the National Endowment for the Humanities' Office of Inspector General since 1992. She was appointed the Inspector General in December 2012. Prior to joining the NEH, Ms. Davis was employed at the Defense Contract Audit Agency, where she began her career in auditing through the agency's cooperative education program. Ms. Davis earned her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration ~ Accounting from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. She is a Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Internal Auditor.

### **Office of Grant Management (OGM)**

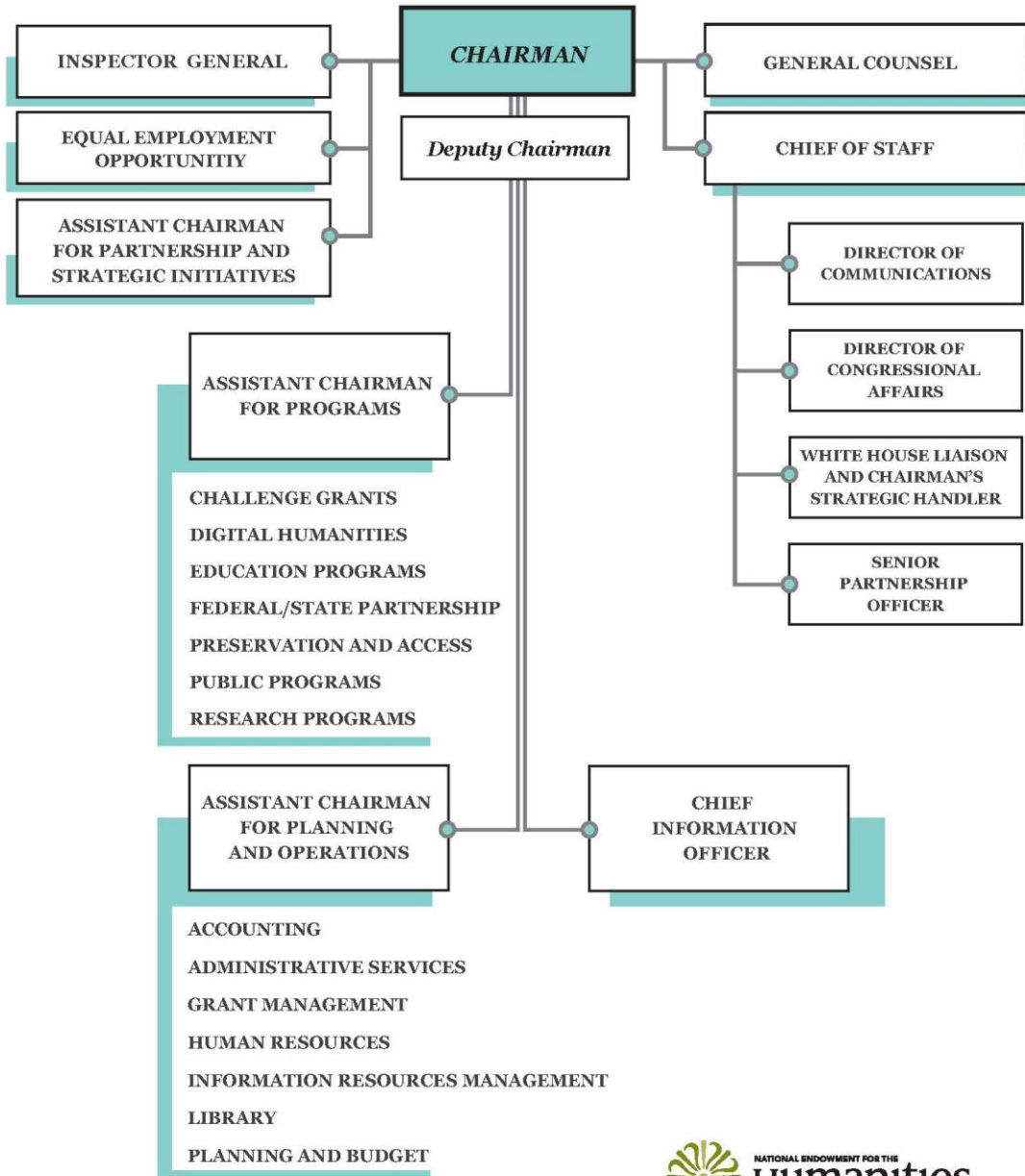
OGM is responsible for issuing award documents and administering all grants issued by NEH. OGM applies the funding formula to the available appropriation each fiscal year to determine the legislated amount of each state council's annual funding allocation. OGM reviews the Councils' annual budgets, issues the approval letter, and tracks the regrant allocations. OGM manages the offer and award of Treasury matching funds and reviews the Councils' annual and final financial reports.

**TARSHA JOHNSON, Grants Administrator**, Office of Grant Management (202.606.8606, tjohnson@neh.gov). Tarsha joined the staff of the Office of Grant Management in December 2013. Her portfolio consists of NEH grant programs in Education, Research, and Federal/State Partnership. Tarsha's federal service spans over 20 years with stints as a Program Assistant, Senior Grants Management Specialist, and Financial Management Specialist. She brings grants management experience from a number of federal agencies, including NSF, NIH, DoEd, and DHS/FEMA. Tarsha spent 13 years at the National Science Foundation where she gained extensive experience in programs, grants administration, and financial oversight. At NSF, Tarsha served as a Senior Grants Management Specialist in the Division of Grants and Agreements, overseeing a portfolio of awards made to universities, colleges, for-profit and non-profit organizations.

**ROBERT STRAUGHTER, Director**, Office of Grant Management (202.606.8237, rstraughter@neh.gov). Robert joined the staff of the Office of Grant Management in July 2007. Prior to joining OGM, he spent 17 years at NEH in the Administrative Services Office where one of his many duties included

logistical support for the orientation meetings of new executive directors of state humanities councils. In June 2004 Robert completed his Bachelor of Science degree in Public Administration, cum laude, at Southeastern University, Washington DC. He completed his MBA with a concentration in Public Administration at Strayer University in July 2013. He is a Prince Hall Shriner AEAONMS; a Prince Hall Mason in the Jurisdiction of Maryland; and a football official both at the high school and collegiate levels in the mid-Atlantic region. In his spare time, he enjoys playing golf and listening to various genres of music.

## NEH ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## **Federal/State Partnership and the Federation**

What's the difference between Federal/State Partnership and the Federation of State Humanities Councils?

- **Federal/State Partnership** is a grantmaking office of the **National Endowment for the Humanities**, an independent federal agency of the United States Government that is located within the Executive Branch.

Federal/State Partnership only makes grants to the 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils, as mandated by Congress in NEH's founding legislation.

- The **Federation of State Humanities Councils** is the membership organization of the state and jurisdictional humanities councils. Like the Councils, it is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit. Two of the Federation's major annual activities are holding the annual National Humanities Conference and assembling the Councils for Humanities on the Hill, a focused advocacy effort for Congress.

While Federal/State Partnership and NEH work closely with the Federation, they are not connected except through shared interests and goals.

## Understanding our website ([www.neh.gov/divisions/fedstate](http://www.neh.gov/divisions/fedstate))

### What's there?

- About Fed/State
- Federal/State Partnership Staff
- Featured Projects
- Grant News
- In the Field
- E-newsletter Archive and sign-up
- Resource Library

**About FedState** describes the overall work of our office and includes links to the legislation that founded the state humanities councils.

**Federal/State Staff** has contact information for the members of our staff. The bios of Fed/State staff members can be found in the Resource Library.

**Featured Projects** has extended stories with photographs of stellar projects carried out by state humanities councils. These projects appear on the first page of the Federal/State Partnership section of the NEH website. New stories appear frequently. Featured projects often also appear in Fed/State's monthly e-newsletter. We encourage you to submit story suggestions.

**Grant News** covers the details of the ways state humanities councils interact officially with Federal/State Partnership. These include managing general operating support grants, annual compliance plans, the general liability insurance provided to councils by Federal/State Partnership, and the five-year assessment and review process.

**In the Field** highlights news from state humanities councils.

**E-newsletter Archive** provides a complete archive of all newsletters published by FedState. All state humanities council board members are subscribed to the monthly e-newsletter.

**Resource Library** has articles and links about council activities, council information, and materials about nonprofit management and grantmaking.

## Other available information on the NEH website

- Contact information for the 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils can be found at [www.neh.gov/about/state-humanities-councils](http://www.neh.gov/about/state-humanities-councils), where there is also a printable version.
- Federal/State Partnership’s brief description of its work and of the work of the state humanities councils is downloadable at [www.neh.gov/files/divisions/fedstate/fedstate\\_one-pager.pdf](http://www.neh.gov/files/divisions/fedstate/fedstate_one-pager.pdf).
- Read about council executives who have been profiled in *Humanities* magazine at [www.neh.gov/humanities/infocus](http://www.neh.gov/humanities/infocus).
- Information about all the ways NEH works is located at [www.neh.gov/about](http://www.neh.gov/about). This section includes a list, with bios, of the members of the National Council on the Humanities: [www.neh.gov/about/national-council-on-the-humanities](http://www.neh.gov/about/national-council-on-the-humanities). It also includes the contact information for all the state humanities councils: [www.neh.gov/about/state-humanities-councils](http://www.neh.gov/about/state-humanities-councils).
- A rich view of the wide variety of humanities activities funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities can be surveyed in the “Explore” section of the website: [www.neh.gov/explore](http://www.neh.gov/explore).
- NEH Matters ([www.neh.gov/neh-matters](http://www.neh.gov/neh-matters)) surveys NEH funding around the country, including in your state ([www.neh.gov/news/fact-sheets](http://www.neh.gov/news/fact-sheets)).
- Read more about the Common Good and efforts to demonstrate the role of the humanities in our public life: [www.neh.gov/commongood](http://www.neh.gov/commongood).
- Standing Together ([www.neh.gov/standing-together](http://www.neh.gov/standing-together)) highlights the Endowment-wide effort to support returning veterans and promote the understanding of the military experience.