Humanities Fellowship Proposals—Soup to Nuts

Sarah Workman, Assistant Director, Research Development (Humanities) Office of Research | College of Arts and Sciences
Sarah Workman is Assistant Director for Research Development (Humanities), a position split between the College of Arts & Sciences and the Office of Research in order to elevate research achievement and recognition for campus-wide humanities scholarship. From my two homes on campus, I provide support for research development at any stage of the process, including helping humanities faculty identify funding sources, assisting with grant and proposal writing, and coordinating nominations for honorary awards.
Why Apply?

- Enhances research & scholarship
- Broadens your networks, builds connections
- Contributes to your tenure & promotion portfolio
- Helps define ideas for your books & articles
- Provides opportunities for mentoring and collaboration
- Successful awards pave the way for other opportunities
Session Overview

• Step 1: Identify Opportunities
• Step 2: Develop Your Plan
• Step 3: Develop Your Materials
• Step 4: Get Feedback & Revise
• Step 5: Submit and Repurpose
• Additional Resources
Step 1: Identify Opportunities
Before you look. . .

- What do you want to do?
- What do you need?
- Are you geographically mobile?
- How long do you want to be away?
- What is your ideal timing for your fellowship?
- Do you have an upcoming leave?
Resources for Identifying Humanities Fellowships

**External Fellowships**

- Office of Research [Curated Funding Lists](#)
- **PIVOT**: an easy-to-use key-word-searchable database for finding current funding opportunities specifically tailored to research needs
  - [OoR Presentation & Training](#): PIVOT
- Biannual email from [srworkma@syr.edu](mailto:srworkma@syr.edu)
- KU The Hall Center for Humanities [lists](#)
- Professional listservs/networks
- Colleagues/mentors

**Internal Fellowships**

- SU Humanities Center: [On-campus fellowships](#)
Step 2: Develop Your Plan
Logistics

- Give your chair a heads-up
- Reach out to the Research Administrator assigned to your school or college to give them a heads-up
- Read the Request for Proposals (RFP)
- Review the requirements and additional documentation
- Reach out to recommenders, if applicable
- Create a timeline - work backwards from the deadline
Gather Additional Intel

- Read sample applications, if available
- Review list of previous awardees and consult project descriptions, if available
- Refer to NEH Fellowship Sample Application Narratives
Step 3: Develop Your Materials
Prompt #1: Part 1 - Project Description (~5 min)

b. “Project Description.”

Describe your project for a nonspecialist audience, stating the importance of the proposed work to the humanities. This description will appear on your application cover sheet and will serve as a project abstract during the review process. Do not exceed one thousand characters, including spaces. If you exceed one thousand characters, including spaces, Grants.gov may reject your application or cut off your project description at the thousand-character limit.
Prompt #1: Part 2 - Project Description (~5 min)

Consider your project description. Who is your audience?
Audience

- Write to humanities generalists AND colleagues in your field
- Usually, you will not be appealing to those in your subdiscipline
- "colleague down the hall; colleague across campus"
- Pedagogically, write to your smart, advanced undergraduates
Writing Strategies

• The Proposal as Genre
• Write with confidence: You are the recipient
• No jargon
• Appeal to funding body; match the RFP and the funding institution’s goals
Structure

• Borrow language from the RFP if these are not required by the funder or adapt sections from NEH Fellowship (see Notice of Funding Opportunities or NOFO)
  – Use the following as a guide:
    ▪ Significance and contribution
    ▪ Organization, concepts, and methods
    ▪ Work plan
    ▪ Competencies, skills, and access
    ▪ Final product and dissemination
Prompt #2: Proposal Summaries Handout (~5 min)

- Consider changes in terms of project significance, methods, workplan, scholarly background, etc. What stands out to you as you compare?
“So What?” / Why Should We Care?

• It is not enough to do something new; the fact that nobody has studied the thing isn’t enough to convince people that the thing should be studied
• What does your work do... to the field/adjacent fields? The humanities? the local community? The broader community (however you chose to define it)? Methodologically?
What to Avoid

• The weeds
• The fishbowl
• The underseller
Step 4: Get Feedback & Revise
Readers

• Aim for a reader within your discipline and a general humanities reader
• Give yourself time to incorporate feedback!
Step 5: Submit & Repurpose
Additional Resources
Recommended Reading/Viewing

• *Writing Proposals for ACLS Competitions*, by Christina M. Gillis, former program officer at ACLS, where she was responsible for the fellowship programs, and Associate Director of the Townsend Center for the Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley

• *NEH Summer Stipend Application Writing Tips* (Webinar)

• Sample applications
Additional School or College-level Research Support

- Jill Ferguson (jsfergus@maxwell.syr.edu), Director of Research Development, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs
- Kristen Northrop (kmnorthr@syr.edu), Assistant Director, Research and Creative Activity, Newhouse School of Public Communications
- Meghan Macblane (mtmacbla@syr.edu), Director of Grant Development, School of Information Studies
- Amy Dumas (adumas@syr.edu), Director, Falk Research Center

- Undergraduates can reach out to Center for Fellowship and Scholarship Advising (CFSA) – Assistant Director, Melissa Welshans (mlwelsha@syr.edu)
- Graduate students can reach out to Dan Olson-Bang, Director, Professional and Career Development (dolsonba@syr.edu)
Institutional Partners

- Office of Corporate & Foundation Relations – Gary Girzadas (gsgirzad@syr.edu), Executive Director; Nora Heaphy (nheaphy@syr.edu) Director, Foundation Relations
- SU Libraries – Emily Hart (ekhart@syr.edu), Science Librarian, Research Impact Lead
- Office of Sponsored Programs (unit of the Office of Research) - Research administrators from OSP are assigned to individual schools and colleges
Q & A
Post-Session Survey
Thank you for your feedback!
Contact Me

Sarah Workman
Assistant Director, Research Development
(Humanities)
srworkma@syr.edu
3-5260
202 Tolley Building