

Application receipt deadline: February 9, 2007; Notification of awards: June 2007

NEH Small Grants to Libraries: Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World

A Traveling Exhibition for Libraries

Program Description

Small Grants to Libraries brings traveling exhibitions and related public programming to libraries across the country.

“Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World” is a collaboration between the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Library Association, and the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary. The exhibition is based upon a major exhibition of the same name on display at the National Constitution Center, Philadelphia, from December 15, 2005 to April 30, 2006, and now touring the United States and Europe. (See www.benfranklin300.org).

The traveling exhibition and tour are funded by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to the American Library Association Public Programs Office.

“Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World” has been designated as part of the NEH’s “We the People” initiative, exploring significant events and themes in our nation’s history and culture and advancing knowledge of the principles that define America.

“Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World” will give public audiences the opportunity to explore and to talk about Franklin’s life, his contributions to the founding of this country, his weaknesses, and his high standards for work, citizenship, and contribution to community. It will look at his background, his self-education, and his philosophical and religious beliefs and their effect on his work and life. It will show Franklin in the context of the eighteenth century and as a product of his times—a brilliant and rather unconventional product of his times—rather than as the venerable bespectacled and grandfatherly figure with whom we are all familiar.

Several themes or areas of interest run through Franklin’s life. He was interested in the individual and society and in their relationship to one another. He believed in the value of alliances and partnerships in achieving good results in science, politics and civic life. He saw the conflict between aristocracy and democracy and believed in the importance of opportunity being given to the common man. He believed in a political order in which rights and power were based on merit, virtue and hard work. He believed in the power of experience and observation and allowed his observations to guide, shape, and change his opinions.

Franklin’s life and work offer many avenues of exploration for exhibition audiences, whatever their main interests may be: American and European history and culture, literature, politics, diplomacy, music, business, science, civic life, daily habits, spiritual beliefs. To each of these areas, Franklin brought an undeniably robust intellectual and creative energy that resulted in writings, inventions, and ideas that have changed the lives of many. The potential for intriguing and challenging library programs in all of these areas is tremendous, as is the potential for using these same channels of investigation to look at parallel issues in contemporary American culture.

Historian Walter Isaacson perhaps best describes the opportunity this exhibit will provide for public audiences: "It is useful to engage anew with Franklin," he says in a book of scholarly essays published in conjunction with the exhibition. "In doing so, we are grappling with a fundamental question: How can we live a life that is useful, virtuous, worthy, moral, and spiritually meaningful? Are these qualities important to us anymore? Which are the most important?" Encouraging modern audiences to think about these issues by learning about Franklin's life, as well as to revisit the Revolutionary era and the debates that led to the founding of the United States, are the major goals of this traveling exhibition project.

One copy of the exhibition will travel to libraries from November 2007 to November 2011. The six sections are organized thematically as follows (section headings and section focus may change as the exhibit is developed):

- 1) This section gives an overview of Franklin's life—from his youth, when he was steeped in Puritan traditions and teachings and received his training as a printer, to his emergence late in life as an important statesman and architect of a new nation.
- 2) This section covers the years when Franklin built his business as Philadelphia's premier printer, launched publications such as *Poor Richard's Almanack*, and improved the colonial postal service; Franklin's family and personal life are also examined in this section;
- 3) The third section looks at Franklin's commitment to public service through his involvement with the founding of several key philanthropic, educational and civic institutions, and shows how Franklin defined citizenship and citizens' role in society; this section also describes Franklin's own moral perfection project and his interests in medicine and public health;
- 4) This section depicts Franklin the scientist and philosopher—a true man of the Enlightenment committed to observation-based scientific experimentation in search of practical benefits for society;
- 5 and 6) The final two sections of the exhibit look at Franklin's political career, which began in colonial Pennsylvania, his years in England lobbying for the interests of several American colonies, and in France championing the American cause, and his return to Philadelphia in 1785 as a respected elder statesman; Franklin's involvement in and contributions to five key Founding documents are covered in this section; his legacy, most of all his *Autobiography* and images of him throughout the past two centuries that memorialize and romanticize him, as well as caricature him, are included. Visitors are encouraged to think about which aspects of Franklin's character or legacy they still see reflected in "the American character" today.

Exhibition Physical Details: The exhibition consists of six separate, free-standing sections; each section is approximately 18 feet wide and 7½ feet high (108 running feet). Text and illustrations appear on only one side of the sections. The entire exhibition requires approximately 1,000 square feet of space for optimal display. Libraries which apply are strongly encouraged to make a computer station or stations available near the exhibit so that viewers can access websites with additional educational activities for all ages.

Requirements for Libraries: All libraries chosen for the exhibition tour are required to:

1. Sign an agreement with the exhibit sponsors agreeing to hosting and display requirements.
2. Sponsor an opening reception for the public.
3. Present a minimum of two programs featuring a lecture/discussion by a scholar in the humanities and focusing on exhibition themes (one of these programs may be combined with the opening reception). These programs must be free and open to the public. Exhibition sites are encouraged to apply to state humanities councils for honoraria for lecturers and/or discussion leaders.
4. In the case of academic and special libraries, present at least one program that is open to and marketed to public audiences beyond the library's customary user groups. Academic and special libraries are asked to contact the local public library to discuss possible collaborations on programming and publicity.
5. Demonstrate that they have sufficient space to display the exhibition (1,000 square feet in one area of the library or other display area is preferred), and that they can provide security for the exhibit, i.e.,

monitor the exhibit at least every half-hour during peak times and every hour at less busy times when institution is open. A description of the exhibit space or floor plan should accompany the application.

6. Charge no fees for viewing the exhibit.
7. Provide required reports, including an exhibition condition report and a final report, to sponsors by the deadline. Sites which fail to provide a final report in a timely manner may forfeit opportunities to participate in future ALA-managed traveling exhibitions.
8. Appoint one staff member as the local coordinator of the exhibit. The coordinator is required to attend an exhibition planning workshop, to held in Atlanta, Georgia, September 27-28, 2007.

Benefits for Libraries: Libraries selected for the tour will receive:

1. A \$1,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for exhibit-related expenses, e.g., travel/accommodation expenses for the exhibit coordinator's attendance at the planning workshop and exhibition programming expenses (The exhibit grant to the ALA will not pay for the coordinator's travel or accommodation for the seminar.)
2. The traveling exhibit for a six-week loan period; shipping is supported by the grant.
3. Exhibit brochures and posters.
4. Two banners that will travel to each site for display with the exhibition.
5. Educational support materials.
6. Insurance coverage for reasonable damages to the exhibit. Sites may be held responsible for extensive damages or loss of the exhibit when it is under their control. Some previous exhibition sites have put a rider on their insurance for the exhibit display period, although this is not required.
7. Both print and online Site Support Notebooks with press materials, art, shipping and installation instructions, suggestions for programming, and more.
8. Technical and programming support from the ALA Public Programs Office throughout the tour, including participation in an online discussion list for tour sites.
9. A planning workshop for exhibit coordinators September 27 and 28, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia. The large traveling exhibit, "Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World," will be on display at the Atlanta History Center at the time of the workshop.

Award Information

Successful applicants will be awarded a grant in outright funds. Awards of up to \$1,000 are normally made for a period of 6-24 months.

Cost Sharing

Cost sharing is not required for small grants to libraries.

Eligibility

Applications are invited from public, academic, and special libraries.

Individuals are not eligible to apply. NEH generally does not award grants to other federal entities or to applicants whose projects are so closely intertwined with a federal entity that the project takes on characteristics of the federal entity's own authorized activities. This does not preclude applicants from using grant funds from, or sites and materials controlled by, other federal entities in their projects.

If an application for a project is already under review, another application for the same project may not be submitted.

Ineligible applications will not be reviewed.

How to Prepare and Submit an Application

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION

Narrative description

Narratives should not exceed 5-7 pages single-spaced, with one-inch margins and should be at least 11-point font. Number and repeat the first sentence of each question in your application narrative. It should contain the following information, in this order:

1. Why would your institution like to display “Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World”? Please describe unique collections and local resources and interests related to the exhibition.
2. What local partners will help you to support the exhibition and what will their roles be? (support letters from partners strengthen your application).
3. Libraries must commit themselves to at least two public programs led by a humanities scholar and based upon the exhibition themes. Please describe your plans for programs and include information about possible scholars and their credentials (resumes are not required). Beyond that, what other ideas do you have for programs related to the exhibition themes? Letters of intent from scholars or other program presenters are encouraged. Institutions chosen for past exhibitions have proposed an average of five or more public programs.
4. Describe the audience you will target and how you will publicize the exhibition to that audience. If your institution is an academic or special library, describe how you will ensure that the public beyond your own user community will see the exhibit and attend at least one humanities program (saying only that the public will be invited to all programs is not sufficient for academic and special libraries). Academic and special libraries are asked to contact their local public library for program and promotional support and provide a support letter.
5. Describe the space your institution has available for exhibitions and/or provide a floor plan. This exhibition will require 1,000 square feet of space, or about 125 running feet if placed along a wall.
6. Can your library provide a computer station near the exhibit for access to websites with interactive educational materials? If not, can you provide any other type of computer access? Interactives will be available on a DVD.
7. What is the scope of your current (i.e., within the past year) adult cultural programming, including type and frequency (e.g., book discussion weekly, annual fall lecture series on local history).
8. Has your library participated in (in last five years) or is it scheduled to participate in any other ALA Public Programs Office sponsored program? If so, please tell us which programs.
9. Are there any dates between November 2007 and November 2011 that you would prefer to display the exhibition, or cannot display the exhibition? Selected sites will have the exhibition for six weeks. Requests will be considered, but REQUESTED DATES CANNOT BE GUARANTEED. Sites which have the exhibition near major holidays will have an eight-week display period.

Application Submission Requirements

Please send the original application and support materials and four copies of the application and all support materials to the address below. Submit your application copies with the cover sheet on top. For each copy, staple the application cover sheet and your answers to the application questions together and put them on top of your supporting materials. Secure each copy with a rubber band or clip. Do not put applications in folders or binders. Thank you!

Benjamin Franklin Exhibit Applications
Public Programs Office
American Library Association
50 E. Huron St.
Chicago, IL 60611

NOTE: Applications and all support materials must be received at ALA by February 9, 2007 (this is not a postmark date). Faxed applications and late or incomplete applications will not be accepted or reviewed, with no exceptions. You may not add materials to your application after February 9. To request this application in Word (.doc) format, please send an e-mail to publicprograms@ala.org or call (312) 280-5045.

Applicants are encouraged to address questions about the selection guidelines, process and requirements to the Public Programs Office, American Library Association, phone (312) 280-5045, fax (312) 280-5759, or e-mail publicprograms@ala.org.

Application Review

Relying upon review by the American Library Association and the Newberry Library, the NEH will select libraries for the exhibition tour based upon the following criteria:

1. Excellent ideas and plans for public programs, including an agreement that at least two programs for adults will feature a lecture/discussion by a qualified scholar on exhibition themes. Applications from institutions previously selected for traveling exhibitions have included ideas for five or more programs.
2. Available and appropriate exhibition space and ability to provide security for the exhibition.
3. Location of the sites. The selection committee would like the exhibition to visit all regions of the country.
4. Size and demographics of the community. The selection committee seeks a mix of different size communities and varied demographics.
5. Evidence that the site has support of community groups and other organizations in planning for the exhibition. Support letters from partner organizations and potential speakers who describe specific ideas and support for the exhibition help to strengthen applications. Selectors welcome programming collaborations among academic, public and special libraries in a community. However, sending the exhibition to more than

one venue in a community during the six-week exhibition period is not encouraged.

6. Evidence of the site's ability to reach target audiences and market the exhibition and related programs effectively. For academic and special libraries, examples of contact with the local public library, and of programs that have reached public audiences successfully are helpful.

7. Commitment of the library for the staff time required for a successful display of the exhibition in the community and development of related programming.

Applicants are encouraged to address questions about the selection guidelines, process and requirements to the Public Programs Office, American Library Association, phone (312) 280-5045, fax (312) 944-2404, or e-mail publicprograms@ala.org.

Review and Selection Process

Knowledgeable persons outside NEH will read each application and advise the agency about its merits. The Endowment's staff comments on matters of fact or on significant issues that otherwise would be missing from these reviews, then makes recommendations to the National Council on the Humanities. The National Council meets at various times during the year to advise the NEH chairman on grants. The chairman takes into account the advice provided by the review process and, by law, makes all funding decisions.

Award Administration Information

Award notices

Applicants will be notified by mail in June 2007 of the decision. Institutional grants administrators and project directors of successful applications will also receive at that time award documents by mail. Applicants may obtain the reasons for funding decisions on their applications by sending a letter or e-mail to NEH, Division of Public Programs, Room 426, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506 or publicpgms@neh.gov.

Award conditions

The requirements for awards are contained in the General Terms and Conditions for Awards to Organizations, any specific terms and conditions contained in the award document, and the applicable OMB circulars governing federal grants management.

Reporting requirements

A schedule of report due dates will be included with the award document.

Other Information

Privacy Policy

Information in these guidelines is solicited under the authority of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, as amended, 20 U.S.C. 956. The principal purpose for which the information will be used is to process the grant application. The information may also be used for statistical research, analysis of trends, and Congressional oversight. Failure to provide the information may result in the delay or rejection of the application.

Application Completion Time

The Office of Management and Budget requires federal agencies to supply information on the time needed to complete forms and also to invite comments on the paperwork burden. NEH estimates the average time to complete this application is fifteen hours per response. This estimate includes time for reviewing instructions, researching, gathering, and maintaining the information needed, and completing and reviewing the application.

Please send any comments regarding the estimated completion time or any other aspect of this application, including suggestions for reducing the completion time, to the Office of Publications, National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C. 20506; and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (3136-0134), Washington, D.C. 20503. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number.