

Whiting Public Engagement Programs, 2021-22 cycle

Guidelines for nominators and nominees

The Whiting Foundation invites selected schools, scholarly societies, and humanities institutions to nominate for the **Whiting Public Engagement Fellowship** and **Seed Grant**. We believe that the humanities, at their best, have the potential to enrich our understanding, help us interpret the world around us, and make our lives more meaningful through deep context and careful inquiry. Public humanities – which take as their primary constituency a public beyond the academy – are one important means by which these benefits are shared widely and directly, and we believe that faculty can draw on lives of study and teaching to make unique contributions to such projects, in collaboration with others.

The Public Engagement Programs are intended to celebrate and empower early-career faculty who embrace public engagement as part of their scholarly vocation. Over time, we hope the programs will help build a diverse and community of faculty passionate about engagement and underscore for the world just how essential advanced work in the humanities is to the health of our society.

Partner schools are invited to nominate one humanities professor for each of these two programs - a school may choose to participate in both programs or in only one. Partner scholarly societies and humanities organizations (e.g., state humanities councils, museums, libraries) may make a number of nominations based on their size; that number will be communicated with the invitation to nominate.¹

To be eligible for either program, **nominees must be full-time humanities faculty at an accredited US institution** of higher learning as of September 2020; **they must be early-career**, which we define as pre-tenure, untenured, or having received tenure in the last five years.² (Note that full-time adjunct faculty at an equivalent career stage are eligible.) Descriptions of the humanities fields and kinds of “public-facing” projects we support are included below in the eligibility section.

Nominees should submit their first-round applications through the [online portal](#) by **Monday, June 29, 2020**. So that we can verify the status of applicants, we ask invited *nominators* to submit the name(s) of their nominee(s) by Friday, June 26, 2020, via e-mail to publicengagement@whiting.org (nothing beyond the name(s) of the nominee(s) is required from nominators at this stage).

About the Fellowship and the Seed Grant

These two programs are entirely separate: aspiring fellows need not have received a Seed Grant, and receiving a Seed Grant does not automatically qualify a grantee for a future Fellowship. Both programs support ambitious projects infusing into public life the richness, profundity, and nuance that give the humanities their lasting value. The *stage* of a project will determine the relevant program. We anticipate awarding up to seven Fellowships and up to ten Seed Grants in this cycle.

¹ Although we can only accept nominations from partners we have invited in a given cycle, we adjust the pool of nominators each year. If your school, society, or organization would like to be considered as a nominator in a future cycle, please contact publicengagement@whiting.org.

² That is, at or after the end of academic year 2014-15. This timing refers to the professor’s first receipt of tenure, even if it occurred at a different institution.

The **Public Engagement Fellowship** of \$50,000 is for projects far enough into development or execution to present specific, compelling evidence that they will successfully engage the intended public. For the strongest Fellowship proposals, both the overall strategy and the practical plan to implement the project will be deeply developed, relationships with key collaborators will be in place, and connections with the intended public will have been cultivated. In some cases, the nominee and collaborators may have tested the idea in a pilot, or the project itself may already be underway.

The **Public Engagement Seed Grant** of up to \$10,000 supports projects at a somewhat earlier stage of development than the Fellowship, before the nominee has been able to establish a specific track record of success for the proposed public-facing work. It is not, however, designed for projects starting entirely from scratch: nominees should have fleshed out a compelling vision, including a clear sense of whose collaboration will be required and the ultimate scope and outcomes. They should also have articulated specific short-term next steps required to advance the project and understand the resources required to complete them. We anticipate that a recipient might use the grant, for example, to test the project on a smaller scale or to engage deeply in planning with collaborators or the intended public.

The programs are designed to be flexible. Nominees may propose to use the funds however will best meet the needs of the project. In the past, recipients have allocated funds for purposes including:

- To support collaborators (individuals or organizations) for their time or work on the project;
- To purchase required equipment and supplies;
- To cover necessary travel for the grantee or collaborators;
- To obtain targeted training crucial to the project for themselves or others; and
- To secure time, in the form of course release or longer leaves, if the project's needs warrant.³

At the grantee's discretion, the funds may be disbursed to the grantee directly, to the grantee's university,⁴ or to a US non-profit connected to the project.

Eligible fields and public-facing approaches

These programs deliberately cast a wide net, reflecting the breadth of the humanities and their potential for public engagement. We hope to support humanists who are expert in many different fields and a set of public-facing projects that use a variety of approaches, media, and methods. We encourage applicants to review the projects of [previous fellows](#) and [seed grantees](#) as illustrative examples.

Humanities fields: disciplines, periods, and perspectives

Our peer reviewers are looking for nominees whose proposed projects and professional expertise are both squarely in the humanities. The [Humanities Indicators Project](#)'s list of disciplines is a useful starting point, though note that for these programs a) projects designed to develop literacy in English or another language or to build creative writing skills *are not* eligible; b) projects stemming from cultural anthropology *are* eligible; and c) we distinguish interpretive humanities from creative arts, so a proposal

³ Please note that fellows are not required to use any of the funds to secure leave. For applicants who choose to do so, the rate paid by the fellowship to an institution for a semester of leave is up to \$40,000 (of the total \$50,000); in cases where that does not fully cover half of the nominee's salary and benefits, the Foundation expects that the institution will ensure the fellow continues to receive both without interruption. (This amount will be pro-rated for schools on a quarter system.) Any leave of a semester or more must be taken by the end of summer 2022.

⁴ Universities sometimes deduct "institutional indirect costs" from grants awarded to their faculty before passing on the remainder to the grantee. For these programs, such institutional indirect costs are not allowed.

to choreograph a new dance piece would not be eligible but one to create a film on the history and meaning of a choreographer's work would be.

The programs encompass the full range of the humanities. We have found that scholars whose work has direct connections to topics that appear frequently in today's headlines are well represented in our applicant pool, which reflects the importance of bringing humanistic content and methodologies to bear on the most urgent public questions. Because we see fewer applications from scholars whose subjects are not so clearly topical, we especially welcome nominations of such faculty.

Approaches to public engagement: methods and media

A nominee can propose to use the funds from these programs for nearly any ambitious public-facing project, new or ongoing, drawing on the humanities. Projects should be designed primarily to engage one or more specific publics beyond the academy, and they should benefit in a distinctive way from the involvement of a scholar. Although we recognize that professors' first and most important public is their students, these programs are aimed at initiatives reaching beyond faculty members' daily working environment – that is, *beyond their fellow scholars and students*. The nominee should play a significant leadership role in the project, but intensive collaboration is encouraged where that is useful; most forms of public engagement rely on such partnership. Note that the programs *do not* currently cover public-facing writing, which the Foundation supports in other ways, or research *per se*.

We have found that most proposals fit into one or more of the following categories in terms of how they approach the public, each of which demands somewhat different skills from recipients and/or collaborators. A project in any category could be primarily analog or digital or combine both.

- *Public programming projects*, including exhibits, public conversations, or walking tours. The ability to translate expertise into the relevant format in a way that will truly engage the intended public is crucial, as are skills and connections that will bring the public to the programs.
- *Community-engagement projects* involving members of a defined public as co-creators, for example through collaborative oral history or community curation. Deep relationships within and commitment from the community are crucial, as is an understanding of the relevant culture.
- *K-12-focused projects*, including the development of classroom resources and participatory projects with students and teachers. Expertise in the relevant pedagogy is crucial; typically, the strongest projects involve teachers as close collaborators in both design and execution.
- *Audiovisual projects*, including podcasts, apps, and films. The ability to frame a narrative and articulate complex ideas in a compelling way is crucial, as is expertise in the relevant technology and in distribution; typically, collaborator(s) are needed to contribute some of these skills.

In addition to previous recipients' projects, a few illustrations include: the design and presentation of a compelling physical or online exhibit on an important but less-well-known aspect of the history of science or the Harlem Renaissance, along with an engagement plan; an intensive partnership with a local community to unearth and disseminate digitally a significant aspect of its own history; the creation of a series of podcasts or in-person public programs exploring existential philosophy or the history of sculpture in Latin America; or a set of professional development workshops for high school teachers to bring recent scholarship on the ancient world or Elizabethan theater to bear on pedagogy and curricula.

Selection process, timeline, and criteria

The timing of the two-stage peer-review process is as follows:

- *Jun 26 2020*: Deadline for partner institutions to submit nominee name(s) to publicengagement@whiting.org so we can verify applicant status.
- *Jun 29 2020*: Deadline for nominees to complete the first-round application online [here](#).
- *Early Sep 2020*: Applicants will be notified of the results of the first round. Finalists will be asked to revise and expand their applications, incorporating feedback from the reviewers, and provide letters of recommendation and institutional support.
- *Nov 16 2020*: Deadline for final-round applications from finalists.
- *Mid-Feb 2021*: Finalists will be notified of the results.
- *May-Jun 2021*: Grantees will meet in New York City for a two-day convening (dates TBC).

Applications will be peer-reviewed by a committee of distinguished humanists from across the disciplines serving anonymously. They will consider the following criteria, which apply to both programs:

- Potential to engage the intended public.*** Is the project conceived with a public outside the academy in mind and designed carefully to engage them? Is the plan to reach that public explicit and robust? How significant will the engagement be, in terms of breadth and depth?
- Ability to complete the project successfully.*** Is the project management plan sound, detailed, and tailored to achieve the intended outcomes? Does the candidate have the skills, resources, and collaborators with the expertise needed to execute the project effectively in the timeframe?
- Intellectual value.*** Is the project rooted firmly in the humanities? Will it make a meaningful intellectual contribution with its audience, engaging them in the complexity and nuance of humanistic learning? Does it bring to bear the clarity, thoughtfulness, and profundity that characterize the best scholarship? What value does the participation of a *scholar* in a leadership role bring to the project intellectually?

Appendix 1 - Advice for preparing proposals

We believe that those who devote their professional lives to the study and teaching of the humanities have unique and valuable expertise to contribute to public-facing projects. We also understand that such projects unfold quite differently from other aspects of the life of a scholar, requiring different partnerships and skills that must be honed through experience. Because nominees may not have written proposals for this sort of work before, we offer a few suggestions from reviewers in previous cycles.

Talk about logistics: One thing that sets this application apart from those of many other humanities grants is the importance of logistics. Applicants should show that they and their collaborators have designed the project in a way that responds to the complexities of public-facing work and incorporates realistic assessments of time and effort required of different participants. Clear descriptions of project activities, outcomes, and plans to address anticipated challenges will help give the judges confidence that the applicant has the project management skills necessary for the specific work being proposed.

Don't assume your public will engage: We are focused not on work that is simply *relevant* and/or *accessible* to a public but conceived and executed with the explicit purpose of *reaching* and *engaging* that public. The strongest candidates will have designed their projects with deep knowledge of their intended public (or even in partnership with them) and have a cogent plan to reach and persuade them to participate fully. Some applicants fall short by not demonstrating that they have thought carefully about how to convince busy people to spend time engaging with a project; or because they simply assume that an audience for, say, a website or public program will automatically materialize; or because they haven't demonstrated that they can speak compellingly with non-scholars about the content.

Know the collaborators you'll need: Collaboration is the lifeblood of public-facing projects. The variety of work involved generally means they cannot be completed effectively alone. Of course, the kind of partners who should be involved varies. Previous recipients have worked closely with teachers, community leaders, designers, museums and historical sites, technologists, filmmakers, community nonprofits, and others. Seed Grant applicants should have identified suitable partners and begun conversations; for especially crucial partners, they may have secured agreements to participate. Fellowship applicants should have key partnerships in place. Funds can and often should be used to support collaborators' time and expenses. Applicants should have a significant leadership role in the project but need not have originated the idea. If you are not familiar with the work of your [state humanities council](#), investigate it; the councils have deep experience with public humanities.

Show you understand the landscape: Understanding the context in which a project will be implemented is as important to the success of public-facing work as it is to scholarship. In terms of *form*, no approach to public engagement will be entirely new, and in many cases there are entire professions or sub-disciplines dedicated to a given kind of work (e.g., oral history, podcast production). Applicants should show that they have informed themselves about best practices⁵ and, where appropriate, that they will partner with others who have deep expertise in a relevant area. In terms of *content*, applicants should show a firm grasp of how much the public is likely to know about a topic and where within that topic its interests likely lie, and it should meet them where they are as a starting point.

Specify the skills the project requires: Any public-facing project draws not only on the intellectual acumen and subject-matter expertise that will be clear from an applicant's CV but also on skills less central to traditional academic work. Applicants should state the non-academic skills required for

⁵ For example, applicants working on oral history projects may find it helpful to review the [Oral History Association's Principles and Best Practices](#).

success and show they either have mastered them or will collaborate with someone who has. Here are a few examples of what we mean: exhibition design, event marketing, coding, web design, use of recording technology, understanding of film distribution networks, pedagogy tailored to a specific K-12 age group, and ability to structure narrative and communicate effectively with a non-academic public.

Appendix 2 – Application overview

This appendix provides an overview of the main first-round application items for the Whiting Public Engagement Fellowship and Seed Grant. The information is also included in the application itself, in the online portal [here](#). Although the standard of review is different for the Fellowship and the Seed Grant because they are for projects at different stages, the basic application questions are the same. Be sure to select the correct program in the first question, as guidance for later items depends on that choice.

1. **Project precis** (up to 50 words): Summarize very briefly what you are proposing to do, with an emphasis on activities and/or outcomes.
2. **Project overview and intended outcomes** (up to 400 words): Provide a compelling summary of your public-facing project, making clear the humanities content, format of engagement, and anything to be produced by the project (if applicable). Lay out all of the activities you and your collaborators will undertake and specify your desired outcomes as clearly as possible. Be sure to indicate the project's status and any work already completed and to distinguish between activities and outcomes to be accomplished during the Fellowship or Seed Grant and those to be accomplished in the future.
3. **Collaborators** (up to 200 words, up to 3 letters of support): Identify the partners who will be critical to the project's success. For each, describe their qualifications, their specific role(s) in the project, and the status of your relationship (e.g., not yet contacted, in conversation, firmly committed). Indicate how collaborators will be compensated and credited. We encourage you to include letters of support from key partners. If you plan to seek out collaborators you have not yet identified, please indicate what kinds of people or organizations they might be and how you will find them.
4. **Existing work on similar subjects or in similar media** (up to 200 words): Describe the competitive field for your proposed project. Much good work is already underway across the country in the public humanities, treating a variety of subjects through a range of approaches. What gaps exist in the field, and how does your project work to fill them? How does your project fill a need? Whatever your project may be, it is important to demonstrate your understanding of other work that is available on similar topics or in similar media. For example, K-12 teachers have access to a host of support materials and often face significant challenges of time, logistics, and bureaucracy to incorporating new content into their classes; if you intend to engage these teachers and their students, you will need to be aware of existing alternatives and how yours is additive. The story is similar for websites, podcasts, events, and other approaches to the public. Independent of medium, consider too the other public-facing resources available on your subject and how your project fits into the larger picture. Our judges will be looking to see that you understand the options facing your intended public and have a sensible approach to distinguish your project as a compelling alternative.
5. **Intended public and engagement plan** (up to 50 words for intended public and up to 200 words for engagement plan): Briefly specify the segment of the public you intend to engage through your project. If there are multiple publics involved, clarify who the project is by, with, and for. Describe your plan to reach them, including the channels you will use. Be sure to make clear, in language compelling to a non-specialist, why the project will be engaging to the public you have chosen. Depending on the nature of the project, this might include a PR plan, personal connections in a community, or any other strategy to ensure that your project will engage its public. Bear in mind the difficulty of capturing attention in our media-saturated world; we are looking for evidence not just that your project will be available to a public but that they will be moved to participate in and be

affected by it. Simply creating a project is rarely enough to ensure it has its desired effect. We are also looking for evidence that you have thought through the ways you will adapt your approach for your intended public – and that you have selected that public carefully.

6. **Non-academic skills required for success** (up to 200 words): Any public-facing project draws not only on the intellectual acumen and subject-matter expertise that will be clear from your CV but also on skills less obviously associated with traditional academic work. Indicate the non-academic skills required for the project to succeed and describe how you have demonstrated expertise in each or will collaborate with someone who has. If your project has a significant digital or audiovisual component, you will also be able to provide a separate technology plan of up to 200 words specifying details such as the platform(s) you will use and how you chose them.
7. **Timeline** (up to 200 words): Indicate the timeline of the major steps and milestones for your project. If the project will not be completed in the term of the Fellowship or Seed Grant, be sure to indicate how that term fits into the larger timeline. A realistic timeline is a helpful indicator to the judges that you have thought through your project and are poised to succeed with it. Note that projects may already be in progress and need not be finished during the Fellowship or Seed Grant period, but we expect that substantial progress will be made through the concentrated attention they allow.
8. **Budget and use of funds** (up to 200 words): Lay out the budget for the overarching public-facing project. Describe how you and your collaborators intend to use the Fellowship or Seed Grant funds in particular to advance the project. Also list any other funding you have secured or intend to pursue for the work. A realistic budget is another helpful indicator to the judges that you have thought through your project and are poised to succeed with it. We strongly encourage applicants to upload a simple budget in chart form.
9. **Public-facing work sample** (optional; up to 2 files or links): You may attach one or two short samples of public-facing work. While the work sample is optional, we strongly recommend including one. For the kinds of projects where this is possible, samples have proved extremely useful in demonstrating to the judges the applicant's mastery of the relevant skills. If you have already begun your public-facing project and have a very short sample you would like to submit, please upload it. Alternatively, you may include a very short sample from a public-facing project you have previously undertaken. Please be sure to select as concise a sample as possible. Ideally this will be in the same medium as the project you are applying with. You may also include a work sample from a collaborator, but please only do so if it is a major component of the project (for instance, a clip from a collaborating filmmaker), and please clearly indicate the authorship.
10. **Resume/CV** and personal statement (resume/CV is required; personal statement up to 200 words is optional): Include a concise resume or CV highlighting your work most relevant to the project and any previous public-engagement experience, if applicable. If you wish, you may include a brief statement highlighting any relevant skills, experience, or personal connections to your project that are fully described in your CV or elsewhere in this application. For example, you may want to discuss previous experience reaching audiences outside the academy and discuss how public engagement has fit into your past, current, and future work. If your project is rooted in community engagement, you may discuss your relationship to the community you're working with. This is also an opportunity to explain how your project fits into your larger career as a publicly engaged scholar.