

Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections

Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections grants help institutions meet the complex challenge of preserving large and diverse holdings of humanities materials by supporting preventive conservation measures that mitigate risks and prolong the useful life of collections.

RECEIPT DEADLINE	NOTIFICATION	PROJECTS BEGINNING
Early December 2012	August 2013	September 2013

Libraries, archives, museums, and historical organizations across the country are responsible for collections of books and manuscripts, photographs, sound recordings and moving images, archaeological and ethnographic artifacts, art, and historical objects that facilitate research, strengthen teaching, and provide opportunities for life-long learning in the humanities. To preserve and ensure continued access to such collections, institutions must implement preventive conservation measures, which encompass managing relative humidity, temperature, light and pollutants in collection spaces; providing protective storage enclosures and systems for collections; and safeguarding collections from theft and from natural and man-made disasters.

As museums, libraries, archives, and other collecting institutions strive to be effective stewards of humanities collections, they must find ways to implement preventive conservation measures that are scientifically sound and sustainable. This program therefore helps cultural repositories plan and implement preservation strategies that pragmatically balance effectiveness, cost, and environmental impact. Projects should be designed to be as cost effective, energy efficient, and environmentally sensitive as possible, and they should aim to mitigate the greatest risks to collections rather than to meet prescriptive targets.

To help institutions develop sound preventive conservation projects, NEH encourages collaborative and interdisciplinary planning, which is important for identifying sustainable strategies. Such planning should include consideration of the following factors: the nature of the materials in a collection; the performance of the building, its envelope, and its systems in moderating internal environmental conditions; the capabilities of the institution; the nature of the local climate and the effects of climate change; the cost-effectiveness and energy efficiency of various approaches to preventive conservation; and the project's impact on the environment.

Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections offers two kinds of awards:

Grants for Planning

To help an institution develop and assess preventive conservation strategies, grants of up to \$40,000 will support planning projects, which may encompass such activities as site visits, risk assessments, planning sessions, monitoring, testing, modeling, project-specific research, and preliminary designs for implementation projects. Planning grants must focus on exploring sustainable preventive conservation strategies. They also must involve an interdisciplinary team that may consist of consultants and members of the institution's staff and might include architects, building engineers, conservation scientists, conservators, curators, and facilities managers, among others.

*New guidelines with the deadline date will be on the NEH Web site in summer, 2012.

To enhance the outcomes of planning grants and to encourage incremental improvements in the care of collections, applicants may request an additional \$10,000 to carry out one or more recommendations made by the interdisciplinary planning team during the course of the project. For such applications, the maximum award is \$50,000.

Planning grants might be used to

- reevaluate environmental parameters for collections;
- examine passive (nonmechanical) and low-energy alternatives to conventional energy-sources and energy-intensive mechanized systems for managing environmental conditions;
- analyze existing climate control systems and the performance characteristics of buildings and building envelopes to develop a plan for improved operation, effectiveness, and energy efficiency; or
- examine options and develop strategies for lighting collection spaces in ways that protect collections while achieving improved energy efficiency.

Various kinds of testing, modeling, or project-specific research that can help applicants better understand conditions and formulate sustainable preservation strategies may also be supported. This might include measuring energy consumption; using blower door tests to identify air leaks in buildings; creating mock-ups of lighting options; testing natural ventilation methods; thermal imaging of buildings; testing the effect of buffered storage enclosures on moderating fluctuating environmental conditions; recommissioning or tuning small-scale climate control systems; or adjusting the operating protocols for climate control systems.

Grants for Implementation

To help an institution implement a preventive conservation project, grants of up to \$350,000 are available. Implementation projects should be based on planning that has been specific to the needs of the institution and its collections within the context of its local environment. Projects that seek to implement preventive conservation measures in sustainable ways are especially encouraged.

Implementation grants might be used to

- manage interior relative humidity and temperature by passive methods such as creating buffered spaces and housing, controlling moisture at its sources, or improving the thermal and moisture performance of a building envelope;
- install or re-commission heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems;
- install storage systems and rehouse collections;
- improve security and the protection of collections from fire, flood, and other disasters; and
- upgrade lighting systems and controls to achieve levels suitable for collections that are energy efficient.

Implementation Grants may also cover costs associated with renovation required to implement preventive conservation measures. Because *Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections* grants may not fund new construction, the costs of installing climate control, security, and fire protection systems in a building under construction are not eligible. However, grants may support the purchase of storage furniture and the rehousing of collections that will be moved into a new building.

Grant guidelines will be on the NEH Web site September at <http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/SCHC.html>.

For links to more information about sustainable preservation strategies, see the FAQs at <http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/SCHCfaqs.html>.