

Whiting Public Engagement Programs, 2022-23 cycle

Guidelines for nominators and nominees

The Whiting Foundation invites selected schools, scholarly societies, and other humanities institutions to nominate for the **Whiting Public Engagement Fellowship** and **Seed Grant**. These programs celebrate and empower early-career faculty who embrace public engagement as part of their scholarly vocation by funding ambitious, often collaborative projects to infuse into public life the richness and nuance that give the humanities their lasting value. Over time, we hope they will also help cultivate communities of practice in and beyond the academy; underscore just how essential history, philosophy, and the study of the arts are in helping us absorb the news of the day, participate as citizens, and live meaningful lives; and broaden understanding of the value of advanced work in the humanities.

Partner schools are invited to **nominate one humanities professor for each of the two programs** – a nominator may choose to participate in both programs or in only one.¹ Non-school nominating partners will be invited to make a number of nominations based on their size.² To be eligible for either program, nominees must be **full- or part-time** humanities faculty in both the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years.³ Faculty need not be on a tenure track to be eligible. Nominees must also be **early-career**: they should have received their doctorate between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2020. Eligible humanities fields and types of public-facing projects are described below.

Nominees should submit their first-round applications through the [online portal](#) by **Monday, June 14, 2021**. So that we can verify the status of applicants, we ask invited nominators to submit the name(s) and e-mail address(es) of nominee(s) by Tuesday, June 1, via e-mail to publicengagement@whiting.org. Nominators should ensure nominees have these guidelines and know the deadline to apply. Our staff will hold (optional) **information sessions** to answer questions via Zoom on the first Wednesday of each month from February through June; nominators, nominees, and potential nominees can register [here](#).

About the Fellowship and the Seed Grant

We anticipate awarding up to seven Fellowships and up to ten Seed Grants in this cycle. 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. They fund similarly ambitious public-humanities work; it is the *stage* of a project that will determine the relevant program.

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.

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

² Faculty nominated by a scholarly society or other organization need not also be nominated by their university.

³ We define *being faculty* in an academic year as either a) having faculty status with an accredited US institution of higher learning in at least one term that year or b) being the instructor of record for at least one course at such an institution that year. Nominees need not have been faculty at the *same* institution both years to be eligible.

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.

For both programs, nominees may propose to use grant 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, collaborators, or participants; and
- To secure time, in the form of course release or longer leaves, if the project's needs warrant it.⁴

At the grantee's discretion, the funds may be disbursed to the grantee directly, to the grantee's university,⁵ 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 subjects and a set of public-facing projects that use a variety of approaches, media, and methods.

Humanities fields: disciplines and subjects

Nominees' public-facing projects and professional expertise should be squarely in the humanities. In this cycle, we are **focusing on the following disciplines**: history; the study of literature, visual art, music, and other arts; philosophy; and area studies combining these fields, like classics and African-American studies. (We distinguish interpretive humanities from creative arts, so choreographing a new dance piece would not be eligible but creating a film on the history of a choreographer's work would be.⁶)

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.

⁴ For Fellowship applicants who choose to use grant funds to secure a semester of leave (which is not required), the maximum amount that can be allocated to this is \$40,000; the Foundation expects that the nominee's school will ensure salary and benefits continue as normal. (This amount will be pro-rated for schools on a quarter system.) Any leave of a semester or more must be completed by the end of summer 2023.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Projects designed to develop literacy (in any language) are not eligible.

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, grounded in one of our focus humanities discipline (see above). 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 grants are aimed at initiatives reaching beyond faculty's daily working environment – that is, *beyond their fellow scholars and students*. The nominee should play a significant leadership role in the project but need not be the only or even primary leader. Intensive collaboration is encouraged, as is equitable use of the grant funds to support collaborators as appropriate; 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), nor research *per se*. The benefits of the project that the reviewers will be weighing are those accruing to the public.

A few illustrations of potential projects include: the design and presentation of a compelling physical or online exhibit on an important aspect of the history of science or the Harlem Renaissance, along with an outreach and 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.

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 grantees 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 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.

Selection process, timeline, and criteria

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

- *Jun 1 2021*: Deadline for partner institutions to submit nominee name(s) and e-mail(s) to publicengagement@whiting.org; institutions should ensure their nominees have the guidelines and plan to submit their applications by the deadline.
- *Jun 14 2021*: Deadline for nominees to submit the first-round application online [here](#).
- *Early Sep 2021*: Applicants and nominators 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 1 2021*: Deadline for final-round applications from finalists.
- *Mid-Feb 2022*: Finalists and nominators will be notified of the results of the final round.
- *May or Jun 2022*: Grantees will meet for a two-day convening (dates and format TBC); if this can be held in person, the Foundation will cover travel costs, so applicants need not budget for it.

As noted earlier, Foundation staff will hold optional **information sessions** for nominators, nominees, and prospective nominees to answer questions about the application and selection process. Sessions will take place at 2pm Eastern Time on the first Wednesday of each month from February through June (February 3, March 3, April 7, May 5, June 2). Registration is online [here](#).

Applications in both rounds will be peer-reviewed by distinguished public humanists from across disciplines serving anonymously. Reviewers will consider the following criteria for both programs:

- A. 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?
- B. 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 needed to execute the project effectively in the proposed timeframe?
- C. Intellectual value.*** Is the project rooted firmly in the programs' focus humanities disciplines? 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 the 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 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 specific 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 fully 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., exhibit curation, podcast production). Applicants should show that they have informed themselves about best practices 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 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 when 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 not fully described in your CV or elsewhere in this application. For example, you may want to discuss previous experience reaching audiences outside the academy; if your project is rooted in community engagement, you may wish to discuss your relationship to the community you're working with. More generally, this is also an opportunity to explain how the project fits into your larger career as a publicly engaged scholar.