PhD Career Pathways: The Humanities Coalition
A Request for Proposals

Proposals due:
May 15, 2021, 8:00 p.m. Eastern
as a single pdf to Janet Gao, jgao@cgs.nche.edu
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I. Background

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) invites eligible participants in the PhD Career Pathways project to submit proposals to join a new network of funded projects: The Humanities Coalition. The work of the 75 institutions participating in PhD Career Pathways has already provided valuable information about the careers of humanities PhD alumni and the career aspirations of humanities PhD students and informed positive programmatic changes at participating universities. The Humanities Coalition will build on this work to enhance the knowledge base and suite of promising practices that better support preparation for diverse humanities careers.

In general, data from the project yield a positive picture of humanities doctoral education; most alumni surveyed report that they are engaged in meaningful work. Most would pursue the same degree at the same university again, and believe their doctoral work prepared them for their current job responsibilities. However, our data also indicate that humanities PhDs employed in business, non-profit, and government feel less prepared than their peers in other fields; in fact, this holds true both for those employed in academia and those beyond it (Okahana & Kinoshita, 2018). The gap is particularly pronounced for early career alumni: nearly half of humanities PhDs employed outside the academy in the cohort three years post-graduation feel relatively under-prepared (see below).

![Figure 1: Percent responding “Extremely Well” or “Very Well” to survey item “How well did your PhD prepare you for [your current] job?”](image)

In the upcoming phase of the PhD Career Pathways project, CGS will collaborate with a group of ten universities to develop, expand, and/or scale up a suite of programs and practices designed to improve humanities doctoral programs. CGS will provide sub-awards of $48,000 per institution for these 30-month projects (August 2021-January 2024).
The current RFP invites institutions to choose one of the following three areas of focus for their proposals, all of which are built on areas of need identified by the PhD Career Pathways project. Note: Proposals may build upon an existing area of activity or activities, create a new program, or combine both new programming with enhancements or expansions of existing activities.

1) **Building Professional Networks and Relationships.** Analysis of PhD Career Pathways data identified networking as a skill highly valued by PhD alumni. Yet the percentage of students who received preparation in this area was much lower than might be expected. This gap in preparation was also underlined by participants in the NextGen Humanities PhD project funded by NEH. In light of this need, applicants are invited to develop projects designed to help current humanities doctoral students build professional networks and relationships. Activities might include, but would not be limited to: 1) building or expanding programs that connect current doctoral students with PhD alumni in a broad range of careers; 2) developing opportunities for doctoral students to build networks that inform and advance their career goals; and/or 3) developing and piloting modules that provide strategies and skills for developing professional networks.

2) **Preparing for Diverse Teaching and Higher Education Roles.** According to PhD Career Pathways data, PhD alumni working in academia for whom teaching is a primary responsibility feel less well-prepared for their careers than do PhD alumni for whom research is primary. Applicants to The Humanities Coalition are invited to consider proposing a project designed to better prepare humanities doctoral students for diverse teaching roles. Projects might include, but would not be limited to, work that 1) Develops and pilots Preparing Future Faculty modules that prepare students for careers at institutions where teaching responsibilities are primary; 2) incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) into teaching preparation programs for doctoral students; 3) providing current doctoral students with opportunities to teach and receive mentoring at community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and master’s institutions; 4) providing information and opportunities to learn about new technologies of curricular development and instruction (e.g. instructional design, teaching and learning in an online environment) and/or 5) providing information and opportunities to learn about other functional areas of the university and their role in supporting the university mission.

3) **Grant Writing and Securing Resources for Research, Scholarship, and Programs.** Whether they continue in academia or pursue careers in other sectors of the workforce, PhD alumni in the humanities often require skills of entrepreneurship, grant-writing, and the cultivation of funders to support research, scholarship, and programs. Responsibilities may involve writing compelling grant proposals as well as understanding the broad range of potential funders and their expectations. Yet grant-writing was identified as an area
where many PhD alumni had not received formal preparation. To remedy this gap, applicants are invited to develop proposals that provide current humanities doctoral students with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively secure resources for the work they will undertake in their future careers. Projects might include, but would not be limited to, 1) development of courses that introduce students to careers in which grant-writing and fundraising are critical for success; 2) development of formal opportunities to learn about differences among types of funders and strategies for successfully engaging their interest and support; and/or 3) creation of training programs that hone student skills in pitching project ideas, writing grants, and developing budgets.

If your institution is awarded a grant from CGS in one of the three areas above, you will have opportunities to learn with and from other institutions working in your specific focus area as well as from the larger cohort of ten doctoral institutions.

Note: To enable comparisons across institutional projects, CGS requires that all participants engage, at a minimum, doctoral programs in History and English, in their proposed activities.

II. Eligibility

To qualify for consideration, institutions submitting proposals must:

- Be a U.S.-based, Regular Member of CGS in good standing.
- Be a current Awardee or Affiliate of the CGS PhD Career Pathways project and have submitted at least one round of PhD Career Pathways data to CGS for aggregate analysis.

If you have questions about the eligibility of your institution, please contact Julia Kent, jkent@cgs.nche.edu.

III. Selection Criteria and Process

The following selection criteria will be used in evaluating proposals. More detailed guidance on aspects of these criteria can be found in Section VII, Proposal Preparation.

To be competitive, a proposal must:

1. Provide evidence that the institution is building upon lessons learned through its participation in the PhD Career Pathways project and any other relevant initiatives. Special consideration will be given to institutions that plan to continue to use data from PhD Career Pathways to inform or strengthen their activities throughout the
period of funding.

2. Outline a clear, organized and realistic plan to pilot an intervention in one of the three priority areas described in Section I.

3. Describe how the project fits within broader strategies to improve Humanities PhD education at your institution. The most competitive proposals will demonstrate how the proposed work could contribute to more comprehensive changes on your campus, and describe a thoughtful strategy for involving relevant campus stakeholders, including faculty, graduate students, and senior university leadership, in the project’s activities, as well as external partners (e.g. employers, alumni, partner institutions).

4. Demonstrate the capacity of the project team to successfully implement all proposed activities. A description of the project team and their roles should be included as a supplementary document (see Section VII). Competitive proposals will meaningfully engage faculty and doctoral students in the design and execution of the work. The proposal should also describe your approach to engaging faculty who are not part of the core project team.

5. Provide evidence of strong institutional support beyond the graduate school.

6. Identify metrics of success and describe how progress toward them will be monitored by your institution.

7. Provide a reasonable budget.

8. Appoint as the director of the project the graduate dean (or primary institutional official responsible for graduate education). Institutions may designate a co-director or directors and other key personnel to implement the project. These individuals do not need to be staff members or affiliates of the graduate school; proposers are encouraged to include individuals from across campus in their project teams.

Selection Process
In May-June 2021, a selection committee will review proposals, and make funding recommendations based on the above criteria. Diversity of institutional representation will also be a consideration. The selection committee may recommend funding pending revisions to the proposed activities and/or budget. Final funding decisions will be announced in July 2021.
IV. Required Activities

1. Active Engagement in the Network of University Partners
As a part of the overall project, CGS and its network of partners will assess the success of individual and collective projects and work to identify promising practices. In particular, we are interested in discovering what university partners are learning as they implement and assess the outcomes of their projects; which strategies are most and least successful; whether the success of various strategies differs by student population and field of humanities study; and which strategies and practices have the greatest promise for broader diffusion across partner universities and the broader CGS member network.

To enable the exchange of ideas and information, and to support CGS’s assessment efforts, university partners will be expected to:

- **Participate in five 60 to 90-minute virtual meetings annually.** Some of these meetings may be replaced with place-based meetings in conjunction with the CGS Annual Meeting and Summer Workshop once safe travel is possible.

- **Participate in assessment activities** (questionnaires, interviews with CGS staff, site visits) to support CGS’s assessment of the project outcomes and the identification of promising practices. Site visits may be virtual or place-based.

2. Grant Administration Activities
In addition to the core project activities outlined in Sections I and IV, all awardees must commit to providing annual reports to CGS. The report will include a narrative report as well as a financial report that demonstrates responsible financial stewardship of award funds.

V. Payment of Subawards

The $48,000 subawards will be distributed to participants according to the following schedule:

- August 2021: $20,000, at project launch.
- August 2022: $15,000 (after approval of annual report due July 2022).
- August 2023: $13,000 (after approval of annual report due July 2023).
## VI. Timeline

The following timeline provides a broad overview of the schedule of activities for the Humanities Coalition Funding Period (8/1/2021-1/31/2024, 30 months). Please note that virtual meetings will be scheduled at regular intervals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Proposals to Humanities Coalition due.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 1</td>
<td>Awards Announced</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August 1</td>
<td>Project start date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>July 31</td>
<td>Annual Project Report and Interim financial report due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Project Directors Meeting; Session on projects at CGS Annual Meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>July 31</td>
<td>Annual Project Report and Interim financial report due.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Site Visits.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>Site Visits.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Site Visits.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Project Directors Meeting; Session on projects at CGS Annual Meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2024</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Subaward period concludes. CGS provides site evaluation reports to subawardees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Final project and financial report due to CGS.</td>
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VII. Proposal Preparation

Proposals should include the following information, in the exact order listed below. All sections of full proposals should be in 12-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. **Parts B and C should be submitted as a single pdf document.**

A. **The cover form provided with this RFP.** This form asks you to provide basic information about the project and the humanities PhD programs (beyond English and History) that will be engaged.

B. **Proposal narrative** (maximum 10 pages total) including the following five sections:

1. **Overview.** Please provide a succinct description of proposed strategies and activities. (1 page maximum)

2. **Prior and Ongoing Work.** This section should explain how the proposed plan of work fits within other strategic initiatives to improve humanities doctoral education at your institution.

3. **Proposed Activities.** Please describe your project activities in greater detail.

4. **Engagement Strategy.** This section should describe how your project will engage key members of your community in the work. We encourage you to consult the following CGS documents in developing your plans for involving others on campus in the work you are undertaking.

   a. PhD Career Pathways Research Briefs that may be relevant to your proposed project. All briefs are available [here](#).
   b. **Promising Practices in Humanities PhD Professional Development**, a resource developed by CGS in collaboration with the NEH-funded NextGen PhD network.
   c. **Shaping New Narratives about PhD Careers: A Communications Resource to Advocate for Career Diversity**.

5. **Success Metrics.** Briefly describe the desired outcomes of your project and how you will know whether you have achieved them.

C. **Supplementary materials** (these do not count towards 10-page limit):

   1. **Budget.**
   2. **Budget justification.**
   3. **A brief description of project personnel and their roles (1-2 pages).**
   4. **Letter of support** from university president or provost that demonstrates institutional support, even in the event of leadership change.
5. At least one letter of support from a graduate program director or department chair who will play a role in your project.

Proposals should be submitted as a single pdf attachment to Janet Gao at jgao@cgs.nche.edu.

Please note that materials faxed or sent by regular mail will not be accepted.

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References


