STCR

Scholarly Tools Curated Repository

Request for Proposals

Strawman Draft*

*Note – This is not an actual RFP. It is a "Strawman" draft of an RFP written to spark discussion about how one might fund the idea of a Scholarly Tools Curated Repository.

I. Program Description

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) invite applications for a Cooperative Agreement to build, host, and maintain a Scholarly Tools Curated Repository (STCR).

The Scholarly Tools Curated Repository (STCR) will be a repository of software tools and datasets used for academic and scholarly purposes as well as a more general-purpose directory of digital scholarly projects. The details of the specific functionality of the STCR will be left to the applicant to determine. However, at minimum, the STCR must meet the following criteria:

- The STCR must have a web-accessible front-end that will allow users to access the information in the database.
- Access to the STCR must be at no charge.
- The STCR must have powerful searching and browsing capabilities. One of the keys to the STCR is the ability for users to find useful tools even if developed for an unrelated discipline. Hence, the searching and tagging must be powerful enough for users to find things they didn't know were available.
- The SCTR operator shall develop ontologies of hierarchical categories and terms as suggested tags for use by contributors (e.g., pick lists, cross-reference terms, etc.)
- The STCR must allow tool developers a simple way to upload their software, documentation, datasets, and other information, and then tag and describe it appropriately. The applicant must supply a proposed tagging ontology that includes items

like discipline, purpose of tool, version, created by, funded by, and others as needed to ensure it can be found later.

- The searching and tagging capabilities should allow for end users to search by author or project as well (e.g. all tools written by University X or Project Y). It should also allow project directors to store information about projects themselves independent of tools.
- The STCR must clearly indicate the licensing status of all uploaded software.
- The STCR must allow for multiple versions of any given piece of software. One goal of the STCR is to encourage the posting of open source projects which could then be improved upon by others. Hence, the STCR must be able to track multiple versions by multiple authors.
- The STCR must have social networking features to enable tools developers and users to communicate with one another on the site. Such communications should be incorporated into the browse/search mechanism as another way for end users to find tools and to find out about how to use them.
- The STCR host must actively curate the system, keeping links up-to-date and actively seeking out new content.
- The STCR must actively market and promote use of the site.
- The STCR must support metrics to track how many people are downloading each package. The applicant may also consider metrics for tracking most popular, most used, most prolific author, or other variables, as appropriate.

Applications will only be accepted from multi-institutional teams (minimum two). The applicant teams are encouraged to be as innovative as possible in membership (e.g., interdisciplinary teams that include scholars, librarians, and other personnel) and in describing how they would design, build, and maintain the STCR. Institutional commitment is considered a key to this project and multi-institutional teams will be asked to supply letters of support from their Chief Information Officers indicating that the institution intends to support this project for the long-term.

II. Endowment-wide Programs and Initiatives

[to be added later]

III. Award Information

The STCR RFP has a maximum award of $500,000 over a three -year period. The Cooperative Agreement may be extended, with additional funding, for up to another two years depending on successful performance, availability of federal funds, and written agreement of all parties to the Cooperative Agreement.

Cost Sharing

Cost-sharing is expected for the STCR RFP and will be a criterion for evaluation. It is expected that at least 25% of the costs will be contributed by the applicant and third parties, as well as third party in-kind contributions, such as donated services and goods. (Learn more about different types of grant funding.)

IV. Eligibility

Eligibility is limited to:

- Any U.S. nonprofit organization or institution with IRS 501(c)(3) tax exempt status;
- State and local governmental agencies and Native American tribal organizations; and

Degree candidates may not be project directors.

Applicants must apply as multi-institutional teams (minimum two institutions). One institution must serve as the lead applicant and administer the grant on behalf of the others.

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 other federal entities in their projects, as long as these resources are not used as gifts to release NEH matching funds and are not used to meet cost-sharing expectations.

Ineligible applications will not be reviewed.

V. Application and Submission Information

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION

Application advice and proposal drafts

Prior to submitting a proposal, applicants are encouraged to contact program officers who can offer advice about preparing the proposal, and review draft proposals. These comments are not part of the formal review process and have no bearing on the final outcome of the proposal, but applicants in other programs have found them helpful in strengthening their applications. Program staff recommend that draft proposals be submitted six weeks before the deadline. Time restraints may prevent staff from reviewing draft proposals submitted after that date. Draft proposals may be submitted by e-mail attachment at odh@neh.gov.

You will prepare your application for submission via Grants.gov just as you would a paper application. Your application should consist of the following parts:

1. **Statement of significance and impact**

   Provide a one-page abstract written for a nonspecialist audience stating clearly the importance of the proposed work and its relation to larger issues in the humanities.

2. **Table of contents**

   List all parts of the application and corresponding page numbers.

3. **List of participants**

   On a separate page, list in alphabetical order, surnames first, all project participants and collaborators and their institutional affiliations, if any. The names on this list should match the names mentioned in the staff section of the project's narrative description. The list is used to ensure that prospective panelists have no conflict of interest with the project that they will be evaluating. This list should include advisory board members, if any.

4. **Narrative**

   Applicants should provide an intellectual justification for the project and a work plan. Narrative descriptions should be from ten to fifteen single-spaced pages. All pages should have one-inch margins and the font size should be no smaller than eleven point. Screen shots and mock-ups are encouraged. The narrative should address the long-term goals for the project as well as the start-up phase. Provide a detailed project description that addresses the following topics:

   o **General Discussion of Proposed STCR Architecture and Marketing Plan**

      Provide a clear and concise explanation of the chosen architecture. Describe how your approach uses best practices from other websites or repositories. Describe how you see the STCR being used in practice and make the case for your approach. Include a discussion of the active curation that your team will put in place. Describe your plan for marketing the site and ensuring its wide use. Discuss how the STCR might benefit both tool creators and end-users. Note that data curation is defined by the Digital Curation Centre, University of Edinburgh, as "maintaining and adding value to a trusted body of digital information for current and future use…." [see http://www.dcc.ac.uk/about/] Curation of tools, likewise, is defined in this RFP as maintaining and adding value to a heterogeneous collection of tools to manage, mine, manipulate, and present digital data and resources in all media formats.

- o **Technical Discussion of Proposed STCR Architecture**

  Describe from a technical perspective your STCR architecture. Describe your proposed databases, servers, development language, and justify each not only from a technical perspective, but also from a staffing, cost, and long-term maintenance perspective. Describe your proposed tagging ontology. (Please include the ontology as an appendix).

- o **Staff**

  Identify the project director and collaborators who would work on the project during the proposed grant period, and describe their responsibilities and qualifications. Project directors must devote a significant portion of their time to their projects. All persons directly involved in the conduct of the proposed project--whether or not their salaries are paid from grant funds--should be listed, their anticipated commitments of time should be indicated, and the reasons for and nature of their collaboration explained. Include a plan and budget for an advisory board of up to [8?] persons. Describe how the board will function and provide input to the project. Include a list of proposed members and indicate whether they have agreed to participate if the application is successful.

- o **Institutional Partnership and Commitment**

  Describe your multi-institutional partnership. Address why you've come together and why you feel this partnership will result in the best STCR. Describe what each institution brings to your partnership. Discuss your institutions' commitments to this project and its long-term success.

- o **Work Plan**

  Describe the specific tasks that will be accomplished during the start-up and later maintenance periods of the grant. Refer to project management timeline (to be attached as an appendix).

5. **Budget**

   Using the instructions, complete the budget form (PDF).

   Budget narrative (optional)

   If needed, include a brief supplement to the narrative explaining projected expenses or other items in the financial information provided on NEH's budget form. The budget narrative may be single-spaced.

Applicants are advised to retain a copy of the PDF containing their budget form.

6. **Biographies**

Include a biographies section that contains a brief, one-paragraph biography for each principal project participant.

7. **Letters of Commitment**

Attach a copy of:

- Letters of commitment from all partner institution Chief Information Officers.
- Letters of commitment from other participants and cooperating institutions.

8. **Appendices**

Attach a copy of:

- Your proposed tagging ontology
- Your project management timeline
- Any other documents necessary for your application

How to Submit Your Application via Grants.gov

[to be added later]

DEADLINE

Applications must be received by XXXXXXX.

VI. Application Review

Evaluation of the application will take into account both the activities proposed for the start-up phase and the long-term project goals.

Evaluators are asked to apply the following criteria.

1. Innovativeness of the application and its approach to building and maintaining the STCR. This includes the appropriateness of the proposed methods; the appropriateness of the technology employed in the project; and the feasibility of the work plan.
2. Potential for success, including the track record of the applicant team to build and maintain large-scale Internet websites and databases.
3. The institutional commitment of the applicant institutions to build and maintain the STCR.
4. The ability of the application to meet not only the minimum requirements of the STCR (as stated in the Program Description) but to also add additional valuable features.
5. Qualifications, expertise, and levels of commitment of the project director and key project staff or contributors.
6. The overall quality of the technical development program, to include knowledge of best practices for code development, testing and quality assurance, backup and restore, version control, and others.

Late applications will not be reviewed.

Review and Selection Process

In order to ensure that the best overall solution is funded, applicants to the STCR RFP will go through a two-stage review process. Knowledgeable persons outside NEH and IMLS will read each initial application and advise the agencies about its merits. NEH and IMLS staff comment on matters of fact or on significant issues that otherwise would be missing from these reviews [Based on this advice from the outside evaluators, the Endowment's staff will choose a smaller group of the most meritorious applications and will send questions back to the applicant via e-mail. These questions are designed to clarify issues that may have come up during the initial review. The applicant will be given 30 days to respond to the questions. Using the original evaluator's feedback in combination with the second round of additional information provided by the top applicants, NEH and IMLS staff will make recommendations to the National Council on the Humanities and to the Director of IMLS. 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 the final funding decision in consultation with the Director of IMLS.

VII. Award Administration Information

[to be added later]

VIII. Points of Contact

[to be added later]

IX. Other Information

[to be added later]