

**Mellon Foundation
New Directions Fellowship Program
Competition and Submission Guidelines
September 2025**

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Introduction

One of the core aims of Mellon's [Higher Learning](#) program is to elevate the knowledge that informs fuller narratives of the human experience. Supporting the expansion and evolution of humanities disciplines through investing in the range and productivity of exceptional faculty is crucial to this objective. New Directions Fellows undertake systematic training outside their fields of specialization to acquire the competencies required for advanced cross-disciplinary research—research that goes beyond traditional boundaries and offers innovative and effective ways of bringing humanistic knowledge to bear on societal challenges.

With this objective in view, Higher Learning invites nominations of highly qualified scholars in the humanities or humanistic social sciences who received their doctorates between 2013 and 2019. This by-invitation competition will provide grants of up to \$300,000 over three years. We anticipate allocating up to \$4 million for this call; the final number of proposals selected will depend on the number and substance of the submissions.

Part I: Overview

Please refer to the guidelines contained herein; these are relevant and applicable only to this competition. Higher Learning's standard grant proposal guidelines do not apply to this process.

Rationale and Description

Serious interdisciplinary research often requires established scholars to pursue formal, substantive, and methodological training in addition to the PhD and outside their areas of formal expertise. The New Directions program is intended to enable scholars-teachers to work on problems that interest them most, at an appropriately advanced level of sophistication. In addition to facilitating the work of individual faculty members, these awards should benefit scholarship in the humanities more generally.

Applications are evaluated by Foundation staff and a panel of distinguished faculty on the following criteria:

- Originality of the idea, overall significance of the research, and appropriateness of the proposed training program
- The case for the importance of extra-disciplinary training
- Likely ability of the candidate to derive satisfactory results from the training program proposed within a reasonable time frame
- Potential for long-term impact on the candidates new or proposed field of study, beyond just the individual's research
- Record of the nominee, including their history of effectively advancing public-facing and/or community-engaged work

For nominees whose retraining would be a departure from the humanities, their application materials will also be evaluated on whether the proposed interdisciplinary approach would reflect an enduring humanities perspective.

Eligibility

New Directions is a limited submission competition and, as such, only institutions that have received a formal invitation from Mellon are eligible to nominate a candidate. Institutions are invited to participate based on a range of criteria, including but not limited to:

- Status as an accredited, degree-granting higher education institution
- Strong undergraduate enrollment in the humanities
- Broad and varied humanities programming and majors

The final selection of invited institutions was made through discussion and evaluation by Foundation staff of these benchmarks and other considerations.

Institutions are expected to run their own internal competitions and may only forward one nomination to the Foundation.

Eligible candidates will be faculty members who were awarded a PhD in the humanities or humanistic social sciences within the last six to twelve years (2013 – 2019) and whose research interests call for formal training in a discipline other than the one in which they are an expert. Terminal degree holders, such MFAs or EdDs, are ineligible. For a description of the humanistic social sciences, please refer to the [FAQs](#) on our website.

The proposed field of study must be a foray into a new area of intellectual inquiry and not just an enhancement to go further in the primary field. Language study, technical training, or skills acquisition such as GIS mapping do not, by themselves, constitute a new direction.

Any questions about a nominee's eligibility should be directed to HLInvitations@mellon.org.

Part II: Process

Timeline

- Tuesday, September 30, 2025: Invitations sent to institutions
- By Friday, October 3, 2025: Applications available in Fluxx
- Thursday, December 11, 2025, by 3pm ET: Submission deadline
- By late February 2026: All applicants notified of selection decisions
- May 1, 2026: Grant start date

Applications will be reviewed by Foundation staff and by a distinguished panel of scholars with diverse areas of expertise in and beyond the humanities.

Selected finalists will work with Higher Learning staff to finalize their proposal and budgets that will be presented to the Foundation's Board Chair for approval in April 2026. If the applicant's proposal is approved by the Board, the institution will be required to enter into a standard grant agreement with the Foundation before the grant is funded. This grant agreement and the finalized proposal will establish

the terms of the grant. The grant payment date will be dependent on the Foundation receiving a fully executed grant agreement.

Convening

Mellon is hosting an inaugural convening of New Directions awardees and alumni in early May 2026. This will be a day-long gathering at our offices in New York City, providing an opportunity for Fellows to meet and learn about each other's work, develop networks, and for alumni to reflect on and share their experience with the fellowship. Recipients of this year's New Directions Fellowship would be invited to attend and should apply with that possibility in mind. More details about the event, including assistance with arranging travel and accommodations, will be shared immediately following the announcement of selection decisions in February 2026.

Allowed and Disallowed Expenditures

Fellows will receive the: 1) equivalent of one academic year's salary, 2) two summers of additional support, each at the equivalent of two-ninths of the previous academic year salary, and 3) tuition, course fees, or equivalent direct costs associated with the fellow's training program. The Foundation also expects the fellow's home institution to use budgetary relief resulting from the award for academic purposes, preferably in the fellow's department. To the extent possible, we recommend aligning the nominee's departmental leave to enhance the impact of the award.

Allowed Expenditures

Grant awards may be used for such purposes such as, but not limited to:

- Salary and standard fringe benefits (including yearly increases)
- Projected training costs (e.g., tuition for the fellow, stipends or honoraria paid to distinguished scholars, community members/elders, etc., under whom an applicant proposes training)
- Project-related travel to support data collection or study (e.g., airfare, mileage reimbursement, parking, etc.)
- Expenses related to attending conferences and professional meetings
- Lodging expenses related to research and training activities for stays of no longer than a semester
- Housing supplements when the projected cost of living in the city where study is to be pursued substantially exceeds the costs incurred when the fellow is working at the home institution
- Specialized equipment and supplies necessary to the undertaking of up to \$15,000 total for the grant period (see Disallowed Expenditures for exceptions)

Disallowed Expenditures

Grant awards may not be used for the following:

- Undergraduate tuition, scholarships, financial aid, or study abroad opportunities
- Graduate student tuition for Graduate Research Assistants
- Business class travel
- Indirect, administrative, and occupancy costs
- To stage conferences, symposia, seminars, or events related to the project

- Research assistants, space on the home campus, and basic equipment such as laptops, printers, and voice recorders (the Foundation assumes that these needs will be met by the fellow's home institution)
- Support for lobbying activity or otherwise support attempts to influence local, state, or federal legislation
- Activities to influence the outcome of any election for public office or to carry on any voter registration drive

Part III: Completing and Submitting the Application

Working in Fluxx

Grant management contacts should begin working in Fluxx once a final nominee has been selected from the institution's internal competition.

Login

All applications must be submitted through Mellon's grants management portal at <https://mellon.fluxx.io>. The designated grant management contact at your institution will receive an email from noreply@fluxx.mellon.org with instructions to activate their Fluxx account, if they do not already have a login.

In Fluxx, New Directions applications may be found by clicking "To Submit" in the "Proposals" section of the left sidebar. The New Directions nomination record will show in the list view with the status of "Nomination Invited." Select the record, and the application form will appear to the right. Fluxx application forms cannot be downloaded, and the portal does not support working offline. We recommend drafting responses to the application questions in Word, bearing in mind character limits (see [Supplemental Questions](#) section below), and copying/pasting responses to the application form in Fluxx once responses have been finalized.

Grant Contacts

The entries in this section determine who can access the application record in the Fluxx system. Only those named as one of the five "Grant Contacts" will have access to the Fluxx form.

- **Project Lead / Principal Investigator [PI]:** The PI should be the faculty member selected as the finalist from your institution's internal New Directions competition. Each institution may only forward one finalist to the Foundation.
- **Grant Management Contact [GMC]:** The GMC is typically a staff member in the Foundations Relations Office or Sponsored Projects Office who coordinates administrative aspects of the proposal, such as the completion and submission of the Fluxx application.
- **Leader of Organization [LOO]:** The LOO is the President or Chancellor of the institution.
- **Financial or Other Contact:** The Financial or Other Contact is typically a staff member who is closely involved with the budget.
- **Additional Contact:** The Additional Contact is typically a staff member who supports the project.

Application Form

Project Title

The project title should be: New Directions Fellowship: Title of Project.

Total Amount Requested

Enter the estimated budget total for your project (numerical entry). The maximum budget allowed for this call is \$300,000. Final budgets commonly range from \$175,000 - \$250,000. Please work with your nominee to carefully determine a final budget that is appropriate given their training plan and may be feasibly spent within three years. Budget periods should align with reporting dates that work for the institution, but the **first budget period must begin on May 1, 2026**.

Supplemental Questions

The narrative overview will be captured through your answers to the Supplemental Questions in the Fluxx application. The questions are reproduced below for your reference.

Please bear in mind while developing applications that the Mellon Foundation is a non-profit organization, and as such we are non-partisan. The Foundation makes grants designated for charitable and/or educational purposes and what you submit to us in writing should always be aligned with those purposes.

Responses are subject to character limits. Responses should therefore remain within the word count indicated in the help text of the corresponding question. The response field will not accept more than the given number of characters, also shown in the help text, including spaces. We suggest drafting responses in a Word document, which would provide a word and character count. The responses can then be copied and pasted into the application form in Fluxx.

1. **New Directions Project Summary:** *Please summarize the proposal in no more than 200 words. (Approximately 1,300 characters with spaces).*
2. **Project Description and Significance:** *Please provide an explanation of the overall significance of the research being undertaken and how the proposed new direction will assist in the development of the field. (Field limited to approximately 2,000 words; maximum of 13,000 characters with spaces).*

Budget and Budget Description

Input the grant budget and budget description in the designated sections within the portal. Please refer to the [Allowed and Disallowed Expenditures](#) section above for more details about what Fellows receive through the award, as well as optional expenditures.

Documents

Please upload the following documents to the Fluxx form **in PDF format**:

- Short (max. 5-pages) CV for the PI
- Letter of recommendation from the nominee's department chair or another senior colleague which should address the nominee's preparation and the relationship of the "new direction" to the nominee's present research and pedagogy. The letter will not be visible after you have uploaded it to the system, so we encourage you to attach these only once finalized.
- Letter of endorsement from President/Chancellor of the institution

Please note that, once uploaded, documents cannot be deleted by the applicant; to amend or delete documents, contact our help desk at fluxxusers@mellon.org.

Submission

- When you have completed all required sections of the application and uploaded the required documents, click SAVE.
- Review the contents of the form to confirm it is ready to submit to Mellon.
- Click SUBMIT!
- Once submitted, you should expect an email from noreply@fluxx.mellon.org confirming that Mellon has received the application. If you do not receive this notification shortly after clicking submit, contact Higher Learning at HLInvitations@mellon.org.

Part IV: Example Materials

Given the unique nature of the competition, we have created a [folder](#) containing example application materials. Files are labeled by the nominee's original field (e.g., History, Literary Studies, etc.). Example files are meant to help familiarize institutions with the competition. They are not endorsements of subject matter and do not represent specific areas of interest for future funding in the Higher Learning program. Access to the folder is limited only to the named GMC. If you need to designate a new GMC, please write to HLInvitations@mellon.org.

Questions?

Please direct questions about this competition not addressed in these guidelines or in the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to the Higher Learning team at HLInvitations@mellon.org.

Detailed [profiles](#) on previous fellows and their research can also be found on our website.

We are unable to assist via telephone.