



**Humanities Without Walls  
2021 Grand Research Challenge  
Request for Proposals**

**PI Eligibility:** Tenure-line faculty in the humanities or humanistic social sciences

**Award amount:** Up to \$150,000

**Project Period:** January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022–December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024

**Application Deadline:** November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Midnight, Central Time

**How to Submit:** Proposals should be emailed as a single PDF to

[HWWDirectorOps@illinois.edu](mailto:HWWDirectorOps@illinois.edu)

**Humanities Without Walls: The Grand Research Challenge Initiative**

What does humanities collaboration look like when it is multi-sited as well as interdisciplinary: when scholars from a variety of institutions and communities come together to partner not just in discrete research projects, but in the broader context of rethinking the direction of humanities research and education as well? And what can humanities research and practice do to turn our attention to the most compelling and urgent questions of our time—global displacement, police violence, water and food justice, multiracial community-building, racial disparities in health, indigenous art and activism—so that scholars move continuously across that porous boundary between the academic and the world? How, in short, can we design a humanities ecosystem that is truly “without walls?”

Humanities Without Walls (HWW) has been testing these propositions since 2014. A consortium linking 16 research universities in the Midwest and beyond, HWW has developed a range of interdisciplinary research teams through over three dozen unique collaborative project awards. These teams, funded by Grand Research Challenge Awards in the first two iterations of the grant (2015-2018), showcase what is possible when humanists have resources dedicated to imagining their research in ways that move beyond the single investigator model or the monograph as a singular outcome.

In 2021, HWW remains committed to supporting models for partnership and collective thinking about the nature and character of humanities work in the world at scale. We do so because we believe this is a strategic method for building racial and social justice, as well as diversity, equity and access, into the structural heart of truly transformative work. In this 2021 Grand Research Challenge competition cycle, we not only renew our commitment to these principles, we reiterate it by explicitly calling for proposals that prioritize reciprocal and redistributive collaborations with external partners, whether those are local/regional education institutions or community organizations. Our aim is to develop sustainable

practices which guarantee that equitable, non-extractive structures and ways of working are embedded in intellectual collaborative projects—so that they will occupy a more prominent place in the long-range transformations of academic culture in the humanities to which HWW contributes.

### **HWW 2021: Reciprocity and Redistribution**

Humanities Without Walls invites applications for interdisciplinary, collaborative, research-based projects in the humanities and arts that build a clearly communicated commitment to methodologies of **reciprocity and redistribution** into their project design and proposal narratives, *regardless of the research topic or theme* they focus on.

Reciprocity and redistribution are **methods** for engaging collaborators in genuinely equal and ethical partnerships—partnerships that are not one-directional (i.e., only from campus outward) or faculty-centered (i.e., hierarchical in ways that privilege presumptively white western scholarly expertise over other forms of knowing).

Reciprocity and redistribution are **strategies** for equity-based change *by design*. These strategies aim to challenge the academic status quo by enabling community partners to participate on their own terms; to co-design and co-create transformative projects; and to be equitably resourced for their time and contributions.

A commitment to **practices** of reciprocity and redistribution also opens up possibilities for new forms of collaboration between faculty and graduate students and staff; between HWW partner universities and regional and community colleges; between HWW projects and Predominantly White Institutions and Minority Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges; and/or between each campus and its variety of public and community stakeholders.

***Taken together, reciprocal and redistributive methods are aimed at attracting a diverse set of HWW intellectual leaders and cultivating socially and racially equitable methods for sustaining their vision and their work.***

*Through modes of research partnership that are **reciprocal and redistributive**, collaborators will demonstrate that “humanities without walls” is not only a metaphor but also a strategic commitment to imagining and doing academic work more inclusively—with universal access, social equity and racial diversity always front of mind.*

Applicants may propose research designed to serve public policy or other applied outcomes, though this is not required.

Above all, applications should nominate a clear and concise research problem and embed **reciprocal and redistributive strategies** and practices in the addressing of that research problem.

You can find more information about the [projects funded through the previous Grand Research Challenges](#) on the HWW website. For a set of talks on the 2021 RFP and the ways that scholars at Illinois have practiced reciprocity and redistribution, view our [HWW Research Methods and Ethics info sessions and workshops page](#).

### **What to Prioritize in Your Proposal**

- A collaboratively defined research question with a detailed rationale for its relevance to “Humanities Without Walls”; a detailed description of the main components of the project
- Evidence of how partnership, through reciprocity and redistribution, structures the project design, its processes, and its proposed outcomes; and of how this partnership model can be seen in the formulation of the research question and in plans for all the activities across the life of the grant
- Description of all research team participants, including key external collaborative partners, and how they have been built into all aspects of grant activity, including proposal planning; discussion of plans for structuring genuinely collaborative partnerships and mentoring for graduate students into all aspects of the project’s work
- Discussion of how the research project can serve as a model for how to build inclusive, reciprocal and redistributive practices that are portable and sustainable beyond the award
- Description of plans for public- or community-facing events or dissemination of outcomes, including undergraduate students

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for funding, research teams must:

- include participants from at least two HWW consortial partner institutions\*
- OR**

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\*Consortial institutions include Indiana University Bloomington, Marquette University, Michigan State University, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, Pennsylvania State University, Purdue University, University of Chicago, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Iowa, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Notre Dame, and University of Wisconsin-Madison.

- include participants from one HWW consortial partner institution and one of more of the following:
  - Regional and Community Colleges
  - Predominantly Minority Serving Institutions
  - Historically Black Colleges and Universities
  - Tribal Colleges and Universities
  - Community organizations

The Principal Investigator (PI) on the primary project must be tenure-line faculty at any of the Humanities Without Walls consortial institutions.

If partnering with one or more HWW consortial partner institutions, the PIs on the collaborating universities' subawards must also be tenure-line faculty members.

The PI on the primary project must also come from a discipline within the humanities and/or arts, but teams may include scholars from any discipline.

### **Duration and Awards**

The project period for all awards will be January 1st, 2022 to December 31st, 2024. All allocated funds awarded to research teams must be expended by no later than December 31, 2024 without exception. Annual progress reports, including detailed financial information, are due to the HWW Director of Operations by October 1 of each year of the project period, beginning in 2022.

The amount of each award will vary according to the budgetary requirements detailed in each application, and we strongly encourage proposal teams to think expansively in budgetary terms. The upper award limit for each project is \$150,000.

You must work with your home university's Office of Proposal Development or equivalent to ensure that your proposal meets all of the requirements in this RFP and also complies with your home university's policies on sponsored research. All applicants are required to include a letter of institutional support as part of their proposal.

PIs and subaward PIs should contact their [HWW consortial partners](#), department chairs, and college deans (when applicable) **no later than** October 1, 2021 with an email indicating intent to apply for this challenge, the project title, and all external collaborators and their institutions.

Recipients must submit a signed agreement form indicating the PI's responsibility for managing and reporting on the use of all grant funds, before award funds will be released. Recipients must also be prepared to work closely with those administering subaward grants on their campuses, typically the Office of Sponsored Programs, the Grants and Contracts Office, or equivalents.

## **Application Requirements**

Applications should be submitted via email to the HWW Director of Operations at [HWW-DirectorOps@illinois.edu](mailto:HWW-DirectorOps@illinois.edu). Applications must consist of a single PDF file which incorporates all of the following materials:

- [Completed Signature Page and Application Checklist](#).
- Abstract of proposal (no more than 200 words)
- Proposal narrative of no more than 2,000 words. This is a descriptive rationale of your research-based project, which includes evidence of:
  - Commitment to methods, strategies, and practices of reciprocity and redistribution with non-university partners
  - Plans for graduate partnership and collaboration
  - Plans for collaborative partnership across the life of the grant
  - Plans for public- or community-facing events and dissemination
  - Significance of project and its relationship to “Humanities Without Walls”
  - Identification of proposed outcomes
- Detailed work schedule including detailed list of activities from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 through December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Work schedule should take into account multiple, differential outcomes resulting from COVID-19 pandemic contingencies.
- Role(s) and expected intellectual contributions of project participants
- Detailed budget and budget justification explaining and justifying all items in the budget (see Budget Guidance below.) All proposals must use the [budget](#) and [budget justification forms](#) provided on the HWW website.
- Name and contact information for the departmental-level financial manager at the lead institution. This should be the individual the PI works with on a day-to-day basis, for financial and grant management.
- CV for PI and all research participants, including all graduate students (2-pages maximum per CV, should include publications and activities relevant to the proposed project)
- List of names and contact information for everyone participating in the project for whom you are submitting CVs, along with a brief description of their individual intellectual contributions to the collaboration. Clearly indicate PI and any PIs on subaward.
- Letter of Intent from the home university of the PI on the primary project. This letter indicates that the proposal has been reviewed and approved at an institutional level and is typically provided by your sponsored projects office.

## **Budget Guidance**

The **proposal budget** should constitute your *best estimate* of the project's total costs. Costs to consider in planning a robust budget include personnel and fringe benefits, materials and supplies, travel, and participant costs. The **budget justification** should explain the budget in sufficient detail to provide a clear understanding of the necessity and basis for all proposed costs. The **budget design** should reflect the priorities of reciprocity and redistribution through equitable remuneration of all collaborative partners, whether they be institutions of higher education, community partners and/or graduate students.

Acceptable budget items include air and ground travel, hotel/accommodations, speaker fees/honoraria, venue fees, copying/reproduction costs, publicity costs, graduate student assistantship stipends, and hourly research assistant costs.

In general, the budget justification should explain the methodology by which the budget numbers were calculated. For example, for a salary calculation, instead of indicating "1-month summer salary - \$10,000," you might write, "1-month summer salary @ base salary \$90,000 on 9/12 appointment=\$10,000. A narrative description of each individual's role in the project would also be appropriate.

Similarly, for travel expenses, please provide detailed information regarding each trip. For example, "4 trips per year to meet with collaborative institution X. Hotel: 3 nights @100 night=\$300; Airfare: \$250, Per Diem: 50/day x 3=\$150. Total per trip \$700 x 4 =\$2800."

Consultant fees/costs, honoraria, or stipends for Community Research Collaborators should reflect acceptable processes within the PI's institutional structure for remuneration for non-university contractors. Justification should include the amount and timing for these funds and whether distribution will be re-occurring (\$1,000 per month for 12 months=\$12,000); paid per specific time period or consultation (\$100 per day of in-community research @ estimated 50 days=\$5,000); or by project component (\$500 for write-up or review of research materials).

Summer salaries are allowable but must not total more than \$10,000 per participant (not including applicable fringe benefits) and should comprise no more than 20% of the award budget (again, not including applicable fringe benefits). All positions for which summer salary is requested should be named and described in the budget & budget justification. The determination of each summer salary must be spelled out explicitly in the budget justification.

Food and catering costs are allowable but (1) must constitute no more than 3% of the total budget, (2) must be called-out and broken-down in the budget justification in a detailed manner which indicated your home institution's upper spending per meal, an estimate of the number of attendees; a *robust* justification must be provided for the inclusion of these expenses.

Faculty salary replacements, staff salaries, basic equipment purchases (such as computers), and alcoholic beverages included in costs for meals/receptions related to projects *will not be funded*. **Indirect costs are not allowed.**

See the [FAQ on the HWW website](#) for more detailed information on allowable expenses. All expenditures must be made in keeping with the relevant universities' guidelines and best practices related to purchases, procurements, and travel.

### **Subawards**

In projects with two or more collaborating HWW institutions, there must be a lead institution. The lead institution will receive the full award and then issue subawards to any collaborating institution. Each subaward PI should complete an institutional letter of support, statement of work, budget form and budget justification form and submit it to the lead institution. These materials should be included with the primary project proposal to HWW.

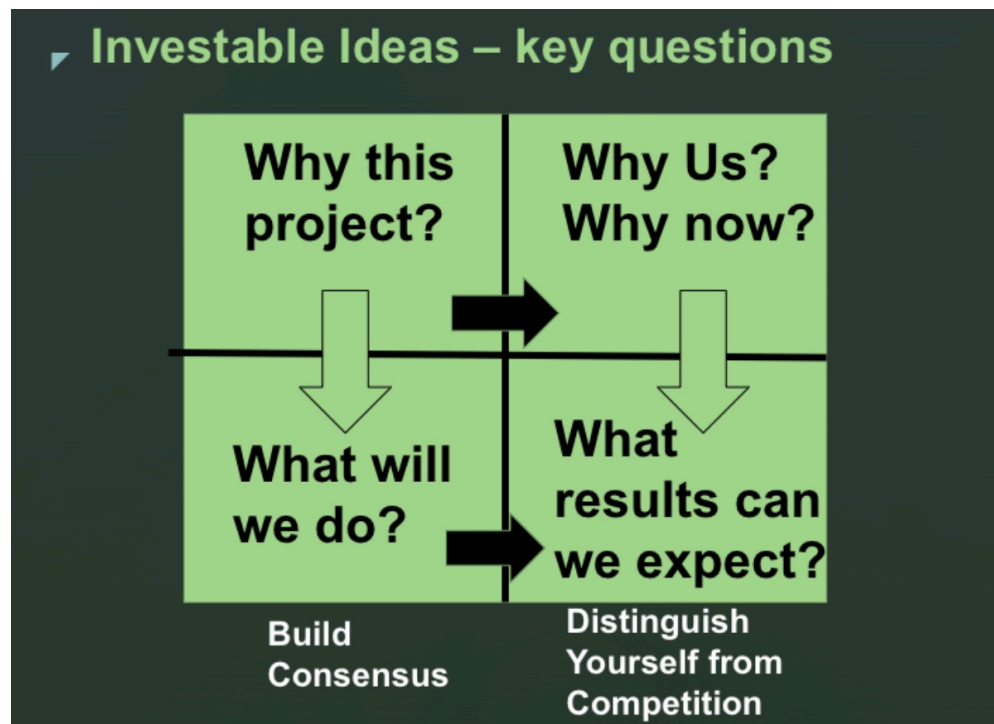
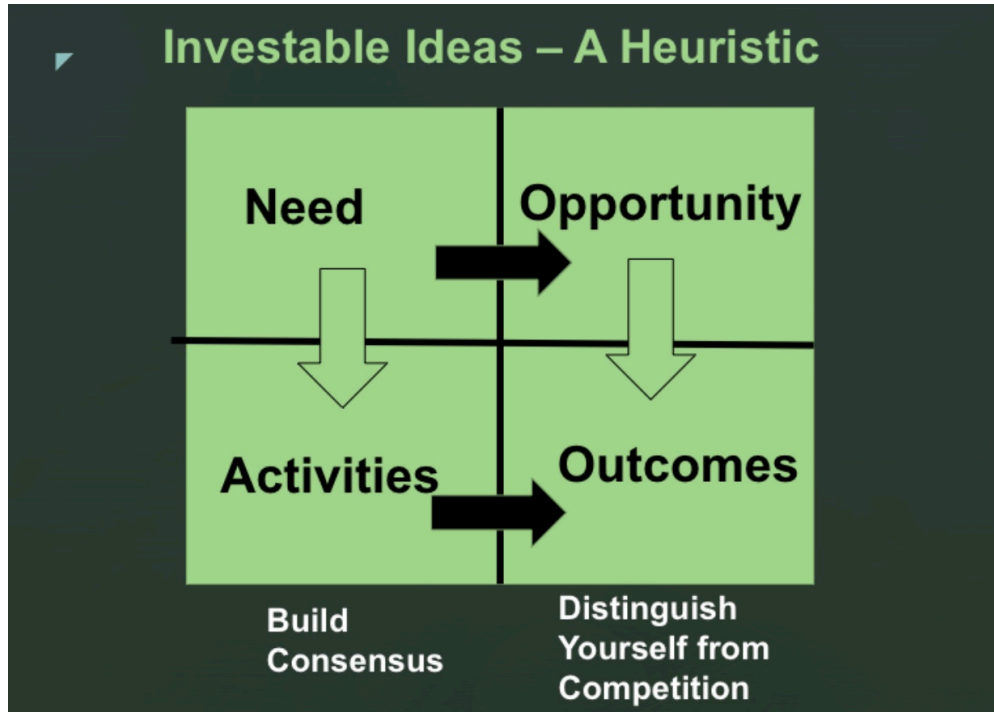
### **Budget and Budget Justification Forms**

The budget forms are available on the HWW website at the links below. The [budget spreadsheet](#) is designed to capture the pertinent financial information within the categories provided. Thus, only the gray areas of the spreadsheet are editable. All expenses for your project should fit into one of the existing budget categories. If you find that you need to alter the budget form, please contact Business Operations and Grants Manager Jenna Ziemann ([zieman@illinois.edu](mailto:zieman@illinois.edu)) for assistance.

The [budget justification form](#) provides an outline of the categories on the budget spreadsheet. Please complete it using the justification guidance above.

**Applicants will know the results of the competition by the end of December 2021. Funds will be awarded to successful recipients as quickly as possible after the decision date with the expectation that work will commence as soon as possible following the award announcement. Those with concerns that delays in the issuance of funding will result in delays in their research timelines should work with their departmental or college business offices and sponsored programs offices (or equivalent) to establish any necessary anticipation accounts.**

Develop Your Proposal Using These Heuristics from Bill Hart-Davidson





## Values, Activities, & Outcomes of Intellectual Leadership



## Charting Your Path



**Horizon:** What would signal your arrival as an intellectual leader? Choose an event to help you know when you get there.

**Milestones:** What points along the mark your progress? (out of your control, but important)

**Stepping Stones:** What choices will get you to your horizon event?

*This RFP is focused on the methods and strategies for realizing new knowledge via research-based projects grounded in reciprocity and redistribution. Below are some suggestions for how to structure relationships with the variety of partners and collaborators you plan to work with.*

## **Collaborative Research Partnerships Do's & Don'ts:**

### **Do**

- Clearly discuss everyone's roles and responsibilities from the onset.
- Be honest about who you are, what your goals are, and what your limitations may be. Invite all team members and collaborators to do the same.
- Develop the research questions, goals, and outcomes with equal input from all research collaborators from the very beginning of project development.
- Explicitly discuss what people do *\*not\** want as outcomes and impacts of the research project. Listen carefully for opportunities to get clarification, or offer it
- Work out how everyone would prefer to communicate, at what intervals, and how information will be collected and disseminated across the entire team.
- Be mindful of the impact of past engagement with researchers in your field(s), from universities, and from your background on collaborative dynamics. Recognize the inherent power hierarchies that may exist between institutions, communities, and individuals and work to minimize those inequalities.
- Build in regular moments to check-in, evaluate, and potentially re-adjust the project.
- Explore opportunities to build in training and resource sharing across all partners, including beyond skills explicitly required for the research project.
- Find out about, and work within, community organizational structures, protocols, and leaders.
- Consider avenues for partnership, redistribution, and reciprocity beyond the life of the grant and be open to opportunities that aren't limited to the topic or methodologies of the project.

### **Don't**

- Assume expertise only exists within academic spheres and that training would only be happening for non-academic community partners from academics rather than the other direction.
- Assume knowledge, aptitude, expertise or interests on the basis of skin color, gender, sexual orientation, or self-presentation.
- Take for granted that everyone shares the same definitions and expectations around key concepts, practices, and responsibilities (i.e., don't operate from inside any kind of bubble). Develop these in collaboration during the development of the project.
- Rush conversations and decision-making processes in the name of institutional deadlines or the timeline of the grant. Allow for time to consider and re-consider.

- Opt out of joint decision-making or feedback processes because of shared positionality/ies with collaborators, previous work with community or topic, or good intent.

## **Graduate Students as Collaborative Partners: Dos and Don'ts**

### **Do**

- Include them as equal partners at every step of the planning and execution process—including as co-authors, co-presenters, and/or co-curators.
- Design their roles from the start in proposal planning, linking those roles to the research-based problem as a collaborative partner project.
- Prioritize students with underrepresented minority backgrounds and do think strategically about how to design your teamwork so that inclusivity is at work in all aspects of the project.
- Consider what content knowledge, expertise and skills students have that can inform the project design; these include research specialty, community engagement experience, and/or digital humanities capabilities.
- Develop plans for professional development (training opportunities: anti-racism workshops; grant writing; project management) and mentoring (by a team member or project participant) for them and share opportunities with them as those unfold.
- Talk with them about how the project work aligns with their job market planning whether in or outside the academy and link them with relevant campus resources.
- Be mindful of how changes to the project timeline or parameters may impact their timelines and progress to degree completion and work to mitigate that impact.

### **Don't**

- Build them into the grant only so that they can do their own dissertation research in the shadow of the HWW project.
- Limit their participation to only tasks that have no intellectual or substantive links to the project work; i.e., do not treat them as go-fers.
- Assume knowledge, aptitude, expertise or interests on the basis of skin color, gender, sexual orientation or self-presentation.
- Include students of underrepresented or marginalized backgrounds only as a means to gain access to particular communities, materials, or areas of knowledge.
- Assign them responsibilities (such as liaising with partners or other participants) for which they have no context or training.
- Reinforce what is often the academic hierarchy of faculty-graduate student in the classroom, the lab or the dissertation process; be mindful of power imbalances in decision-making processes and explicitly invite and allow for equal participation in those processes.