

NDSA Town Hall on Navigating an Uncertain Federal Funding Future Google Doc

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This document is open to all and is set up to ensure the anonymity of all who wish to contribute. We welcome comments on the following questions by both those who are unable to attend the town hall live, and those joining us live. NDSA volunteers will take notes during the event so that speakers will not have to speak and capture their thoughts here simultaneously. The final document will be shared via the NDSA-ALL list and on our blog.

How have you or your organization been affected by the federal grant terminations and ongoing uncertainty?

Discussion in meeting/notes doc comments:

- Layoffs, reductions in student hours/employment, reduced collections budget, hiring freezes, reduced professional development funding
- Yes, my job is supported by an IMLS grant and I don't know if I will have a job after August. This means that the archive I work in will not continue to be processed and the project will lose momentum and might never be restarted.
- I am one of roughly 100 former NEH staff terminated as of 6/10. To this point, NEH folks have not been ordered reinstated. Fortunately I've landed back in my previous role at UFlorida.
- Chat comment: "Even as the federal government is in disarray, the legislative process continues every day. Sen. Markey's office is ready and willing to introduce legislation that supports new funding for archives, but we need a cosponsor. If you have a Republican US rep or senator and you are willing to meet with their office to advocate for archives, hmu!! (facilitator.jess@gmail.com)
<https://www2.archivists.org/groups/committee-on-public-policy/public-archives-resiliency-act>

Themes from anonymous Menti comments:

Funding instability

- "Unable to fill a vacated position due to instability of funding."
- "We've lost funding for multiple projects and enthusiastic and promising employees have left the org for more stable work elsewhere"
- "We are not allowed to get federal funding but are now concerned about competition for the non-federal grants we apply for."
- "We have had several cultural heritage grants terminated. Thankfully we have been able to continue the work through other means. However, this is limiting our capacity to work on similar projects."

- "I'm at a university, and the cuts have created massive budget cuts and associated austerity measures. In my unit, many of the faculty have had their entire programs of research gutted."
- "We received IMLS funding as a match to help establish our digital preservation program. The uncertainty of continued funding has been very difficult."
- "Had a grant terminated. Also inability to get future funding. Had to terminate staff, cut programs."
- "Chilling effect on project proposal development"
- "I have felt somewhat insulated at my organization -- thus far, anyway. When I've gone to recent conferences/workshops, it has been striking to see how many peers' projects have been terminated."
- "My institution is undergoing widespread budget cuts due to impending loss of federal income resulting in substantial voluntary and involuntary separations (about 20%)"
- "Huge cuts to orgs overall budget. Anticipating layoffs but no mass layoffs yet."

Layoffs

- "We have experienced layoffs that directly affect our operations abilities. So far, we are still receiving grant payments"
- "We lost an NDNP grant, which is resulting in a layoff. Our IMLS grant ended up coming through, but it was slow and low."
- "Daily questions from staff if they should find other jobs."
- "As of yet, no layoffs. Lost a large grant though."
- "IMLS grant was stopped and has not been reinstated. We had to let staff go"
- "(Fed here) my org has lost 1/3 of our personnel due to DOGE"
- "About 30 people laid off, huge reorganization, reduced professional development, hiring freeze."
- "Pretty much all of the above. We just had layoffs, and are cutting programs/services on kind of a rolling basis at this point. We've also had students lose their visas or be deported."

Hiring freezes

- "Hiring and spending freezes"
- "Our campus is under a hiring freeze"
- "With loss of indirect costs University is unable to provide as many graduate assist ships. University Hiring freeze. With limits to DEI, loss of research supporting marginalized groups"
- "It's well known that Harvard has lost ~ \$5B in funding across the board. The whole University is operating under a hiring and spending freeze."

Morale issues

- "No direct impact but deep issues of morale and hard to maintain focus"

International students

- "We had students lose their student visas. We have a high proportion of international students who are facing disincentives to study here."

Are there projects you know of that have been paused, defunded, or left in limbo?

Discussion in meeting/notes doc comments:

- The processing of the archive that I worked in.
- DOGE defunded all but about 50 NEH projects funded since 2020. Many were already over, but the goal was to turn back the clock on the last administration, even for programs they've kept now.

Anonymous Menti comments:

- "Yes - all of the above"
- "Yes to all"
- "Yes, four at my own organization. Several dozen more at other organizations"
- "Yes to all"
- "Yes to all—DOGE even bragged about defunding one of our projects"
- "Yes, all of the above. Some at my institution and at partner organizations. None in my dept."
- "The processing of my archive might not continue if we don't get the IMLS grant we applied for"
- "Many research projects across humanities and sciences."
- "yes - all three plus lack of momentum for a range new initiatives"
- "A couple of colleagues funding cut off mid project"
- "Many grants throughout campus, impacting researchers we work with"
- "NDSA sustainability grant (submitted and no advancement), DadoCM had their funding paused and then I think temporarily reinstated but with precarity"
- "Yes, and certain online platforms we are using are going to hit a wall soon once we run out of money"
- "also travel bans making some participation impractical / impossible."
- "two projects i was involved in have been defunded"
- "Yes to all, but not to my dept"
- "Yes. Several projects, not just IMLS and NEH funded but also USAID and State Department"
- "Several IMLS and NSF grants in our unit, especially impacting our more junior faculty."
- "My project of digitizing HBCU special collections may not be funded under Title III"
- "Yes, Phase 3 of a project is in limbo"
- "I'm a digital archivist contractor at a university and our NASA mission is slated for termination."
- "Yes to all"
- "Yes to all, and several at my organization. Several of my own projects have been paused."
- "Yes in Education (DoE) and Pharmacy (NIH) departments."
- "Upon further review, IMLS has determined that your grant is unfortunately no longer consistent with the agency's priorities and no longer serves the interest of the United States and the IMLS Program."

Do you have any suggestions for creative or alternative funding or support models for initiatives in the field? (This can be specific or general)

Themes from anonymous Menti comments:

Planning challenges

- "Not a funding solution, but we are looking to rearticulate programmatic success in terms of ongoing (qualitative) improvement rather than ongoing (quantitative) growth."
- "Normally, we'd be able to draw on University endowment to cover short-term short falls, but not possible under spending freeze. Fiscal year starts next week & we don't have a budget, so we can't plan"
- "Planning is a serious issue here, too. Huge delays on finding out status of funds we thought we already had and new funds."
- "State and federal issues compounding each other."
- "We had found some alternative local support for a hugely popular program, but then we lost the ability to hire back the person who had been doing the work, so we were stymied."
- "finding ways to make digipres work visible, represent the impact of disappearing support"
- "the budget bill shifts fed responsibilities to states who will not have funds to support social programs and therefore cut deeper into cultural funding."

Collaboration

- "More cross-institutional collaboration"
- "Intl partnerships"
- "Lots of DP people are working in isolation. Finding a safe space for solidarity between individuals."
- "Have been working on more collaboration and mutual support with local agencies."
- "Merging organizations"

Private donors and foundations

- "Private foundations, corporations and wealthy progressive donors who care about our issues but might not realize the nature of the gaps created"
- "I've been funded as an archivist by very specific funding sources. I think this will depend on a place's subject area."
- "We're establishing shared infrastructure across our speciality subject area and channeling support from individual and corporate donors."
- "is there a break out into semi-commercial research and development funding?"
- "Local/regional foundations for historical/cultural research"
- "we have approached private foundations but of course everyone is doing this so they are likely overwhelmed. Our main actions have been to control costs as tightly as we can"

Shared infrastructure

- "Shared infrastructure"
- "Find other organisations to share costs with"

- “consolidating like-minded efforts (where possible/appropriate) such as open-source tools and orgs that are seeking pathways towards sustainability”

Community empowerment

- “Empower communities to preserve their own heritage. This doesn't solve funding for archives, but perhaps shifts the type of funding we can seek out and look for.”
- “The end of higher education as we know it is nigh. We should work to empower communities to preserve their own materials and create networks to do so.”
- “advocate to shift available resources to collective efforts rather than for-profit investments”

Professional associations

- “Professional associations that aren't constrained by the federal restrictions on mentioning or addressing anything related to DEI”

What role (if any) do you see NDSA playing in further supporting or bolstering community-based work?

Discussion in meeting/notes doc comments:

- OSTP memo for Gold Standard Science – how could we leverage to advocate for causes that we care about?
 - “Scientists have come out resoundingly against the ‘Gold Standard’ statement, concerned that good science will be disregarded, so our best role their might be to provide clarity about FAIR and other data good practices”
 - <https://hoodline.com/2025/06/trump-administration-mandates-gold-standard-science-to-enhance-federal-research-integrity/>
 - OSTP Memo — might connect with SPARC on what some of the impacts might be...
 - OSTP memo for Gold Standard Science. Of note, reproducibility. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/OSTP-Guidance-for-GSS-June-2025.pdf>
 “The gold “standards” being defined here are in fact how science - and scholarship, more broadly - works now. Despite this list, what we're seeing enforced in practice is the opposite.”
 - From the Center for Open Science <https://www.cos.io/about/news/cos-statement-on-restoring-gold-standard-science-executive-order>
 - “Absolutely agree - this memo is only positive if it's writers agree with the definitions that the community holds foundational.”
- Preserving access to public data outside of federally funded/controlled access points (data rescue); Advocacy not only to lawmakers, but also to users of the data
- Something beyond advocacy, which we've been doing for ages and hasn't been successful even in good times. Like how do we leverage provenance, fixity, etc. in an age of AI? We can reframe ourselves as sources of truth, not hallucinations.

- Chat comment: "Of course, helpful to keep in mind that phrases like "merit-based peer review" have been used recently to mean "only what the administration likes." We should be careful not to cede any ground when it comes to our community standards."
- Chat comment: "For instance, an excerpt from a recent NEH press release, implying that past work was sub-standard: "NEH has also taken programmatic steps to ensure that all future awards will, among other things, be merit-based, awarded to projects that do not promote extreme ideologies based upon race or gender, and that help to instill an understanding of the founding principles and ideals that make America an exceptional country.""
- Chat comment: "I don't have an answer, but one concern I have is that in times of financial stress, many of our institutions tend to look inward, drop memberships, put up walls. To the extent that those who feel relatively well-resourced or stable can reach out to others, that would be helpful."

Themes from anonymous Menti comments:

Advocacy

- "unified voice for advocacy" (+1 in comments)
- "Advocacy and public outreach. I think many people both inside and outside the field may need a better understanding of why this type of work is so critical."
- "In addition to advocacy, NDSA also provides important community longitudinal data through surveys that builds into community-based work"
- "Helping prove importance of the work to organizations we work for"
- "Advocacy? We've been doing that for decades now. We need to be more strategic than just doing the same thing which hasn't worked even in the good times."
- "In "normal" times, playing an important advocacy role, but unfortunately I don't think that would have any real effect (since the subtext of the funding cuts isn't really about the funded research)."
- "+1 to not knowing how advocacy would work when all the problems we'd be advocating against are what the administration wants."
- "Advancing the case for elements of digital preservation that the White House isn't smart enough to know they should be vilifying, e.g. AI for data management"

Strategy

- "the plan has to be to build back stronger. Easy to say but hard to know how to achieve that."
- "Keep the big picture in mind but focus on small actions so that we can stay agile and responsive - small investments with goal of seeing what sticks and is worth continuing"
- "NDSA can continue to facilitate the strategy: (1) Stick together (2) Stick to our core values, mission"
- "definitely find ways to use their own words/tools/priorities against them"
- "Maybe leverage a high profile event like world cup to showcase our agenda"

Funding

- "Foster discussions beyond this emergency situation. It's likely we'll be facing these funding lapses in the long term, even if some recent grants are restored."

- “In the short-term, a lot of the game will be about reframing digital preservation in fundable ways, such as not overtly emphasizing DEI objectives but instead focusing on jazzy technology”
- “creating alternative approaches to grants that avoid the current administration’s “trigger words””

Collaboration

- “Facilitating connections/collaboration.”
- “Opportunities for people to talk to each other/compare notes/coordinate together and share ideas”
- “Helping to maximize opportunities for productive collaboration.”

Outreach

- “Fill the gap in public outreach about the work of DP - tell the stories to the public and governing bodies”
- “communicate the impact on agencies outside of the US so they can step up.. Many agencies outside of the US depend on tools / data / services that come from US but are not inherently 'american'. .”
- “Working with communities to explore how DP can continue outside of institutions.”
- “Even with open-source tools, local communities might need support in spinning up those tools and using them.”

Events

- “more events like this” (+1 in comments)
- “supporting regional meetups (does this already happen?)”
- “There's so much uncertainty now that it is hard to answer this because it's hard to know what will be effective. Most important in such volatile situations is to meet and talk often”

Other comments or questions?

Maybe there are ways to work with commercial companies for digitization. As a commercial org, we have multiple scanners but are only using one at the moment. So perhaps there are new ways to rent the technology or even a space for orgs to scan without purchasing large equipment or paying full price of the commercial employees.

Suggestion - submit proposals on this topic.

Digital Preservation Virtual 2025 - Call for Proposals

<https://ndsa.org/conference/digital-preservation-virtual-2025/cfp/>

William Kilbride, DPC: “It's a while away but can we scope something for World Digital Preservation Day become more important. Or the BitList. Can we amplify each other? Can we develop common messages and talking points?”

DPOE-N will begin accepting application again for microgrants (up to \$2,500) for digital preservation professional development opportunities in September: <https://www.dpoe.network/>

Resources, Inventories

Examples of public-facing lists of digital preservation/archives/library programs that have been affected - (such as cut and defunded.) including things like spreadsheets and/or airtable that lists and describes the programs.

- Survey Launch: Impacts of the Trump Administration on Archives and Archival Workers
 - <https://connect.archivists.org/discussion/survey-launch-impacts-of-the-trump-administration-on-archives-and-archival-workers-12>
- Tracking Government Information (TGI) is tracking gov docs loss and news stories of gov info impacted <https://z.umn.edu/trackgovinfosite>
- “IMLS Matters”.
 - Not a list of canceled projects — but Thomas Padilla has been collecting stories about how IMLS has positively impacted work and how.
 - <https://imls-matters.github.io/imlsmatters/>
- Spreadsheet: NEA impacted grants and Orgs:
 - <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bgNKOv-XGiITM7GbDnfrvMZUUh6Uw8SCJ54q0d9roM/edit?gid=1417961533#gid=1417961533>
- From the Association of Computing in the Humanities: NEH Grants 2025
 - <https://impact.ach.org/>
- Tracker of all the litigation around cuts, inclusive granting agencies. Lawfare’s “Trump Administration Litigation Tracker”
 - <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/projects-series/trials-of-the-trump-administration/tracking-trump-administration-litigation>
 - This project includes two tables that follow legal challenges to the actions from the Trump administration:
 - The Litigation Tracker table tracks legal challenges to the Trump administration’s executive actions that deal with national security issues, as well as cases on behalf of the Trump administration to enforce them. You can sort the table by clicking the column titles and query keywords using the search box in the top left of the table. The table has the case name, what executive action is being challenged, the status of the case, and a summary of the litigation being brought. View an explanation of the statuses below.
 - The Alien Enemies Act Proclamation: State of Play table tracks the ongoing litigation challenging deportations under President Trump's invocation of the Alien Enemies Act.
- Lib Guide on tracking govt information cuts: Government Information: Trump Administration Changes - Research Guides at California State University Sacramento
 - <https://csus.libguides.com/c.php?g=1447820&p=10787362>
- SAA's joint working group for issues & awareness has a form for sharing positive stories of how archives have "saved taxpayer money" !! “Share Your Archives and Records Management Story”
 - <https://airtable.com/appfl2nf1PrPA8l5x/pagPosQwLcrP4OnaK/form>

- Health data: “Health Data Preservation Project”
 - <https://healthjournalism.org/resources/health-data-preservation-project/>
 - AHCJ is part of a growing coalition of news nonprofits, journalism scholars and others working to conserve and protect vital health data that was previously publicly available on federal websites. Let us know if there are resources we should add to this page by contacting Andrea Waner at andrea@healthjournalism.org.
- TGI site: Tracking Government Information (TGI)
 - A project that tracks removed, modified, and impacted federal government information & resources. Purpose of this site is to address: “What’s going on with Government Information?”
 - <https://sites.google.com/umn.edu/trackinggovinfo>
 - Currently - the site is beta. still working on the final version. once it is ready and documentation is done, they will ask for volunteers & populate from that moment currently have a 23 page list of urls to stories that they’ll backfill
- ‘Big Beautiful Bill’ Refines Endowment & Foundation Taxes with Tiers
 - <https://www.tiff.org/big-beautiful-bill-refines-endowment-foundation-taxes-with-tiers/>
- COS Statement on “Restoring Gold Standard Science” Executive Order
 - <https://www.cos.io/about/news/cos-statement-on-restoring-gold-standard-science-executive-order>