

HumanitiesDC

# Strategic Plan

Executive  
Summary

Fiscal Year 2023-2024

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## Founded in 1980,

HumanitiesDC illuminates and celebrates the people, places, cultures, and events within Washington, DC that define our humanness. Through public programs and community-based grantmaking, HumanitiesDC provides platforms and resources to amplify the voices of all DC residents and practitioners as they explore the power of humanities. HumanitiesDC's rich history of impact includes signature programs like the Oral History Collaborative, more than 2,000 grants made to individuals and organizations, and much more.

In 2021, HumanitiesDC experienced a major leadership transition welcoming new staff and board members, including a new Executive Director, Rebecca Lemos-Otero. Under Rebecca's leadership, HumanitiesDC embarked on a strategic planning process to help ground the new organizational team and guide the organization's priorities through FY2024 (November 1, 2022- October 30, 2024). This strategic plan intentionally spans a shorter time period than is typical and will set the stage for a more in depth strategic planning process in the future.

This strategic plan reflects the hard work and visionary thinking of the 2022 HumanitiesDC staff and board; building on more than 40 years of impact and dedication from the many stakeholders that led HumanitiesDC to this point.

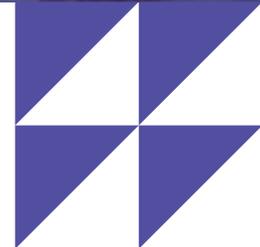
# Executive Summary





# Mission

HumanitiesDC aims to enrich the quality of life, foster intellectual stimulation, and promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of local humanities in all neighborhoods of the District through grantmaking and public programs.



A photograph of an orchestra conductor standing on a podium, facing a group of musicians seated with their instruments. The scene is dimly lit, with a blue overlay. In the top left corner, there are decorative blue curved lines.

# Vision

Our vision is to transform the District of Columbia through the **power of the humanities**.

**The humanities are our humanities** - the processes and documentation of our human experience.

**The humanities encourage us** to think creatively and critically, to reason, and to ask questions.

**The humanities provide** our sense of identity, place, and community.

**The humanities help us** to know our past, make sense of our present, and envision our future.

Incorporating the humanities disciplines into our lives will strengthen our civic engagement, unite us during times of triumph and tragedy, provide us with new insights, and make District of Columbia neighborhoods better places to live.

# Values

## Equity Driven

We strive to center equity principles across our organization, internally and externally. This focus helps us center access, inclusion, and diversity in all our work to create structures that share power and core decision-making.

## Community Powered

As an organization based in the humanities, we recognize that our work would not be possible if not for the strength and experiences of all the people who make up our city. Our aim is to build authentic relationships and collaborations that reflect the vibrancy of our community.

## Creative Vision

We relish opportunities to venture into unexplored territory. We strive to bring a creative and entrepreneurial spirit into our collective work with the hopes of continuing to explore how the humanities can work as a connector across all our lives.

## Amplifying Voices

We seek to use the power and resources made available to us to create spaces and opportunities to celebrate and share District stories, culture, and experiences, especially those traditionally marginalized or left out of mainstream narratives.

## Acting with Integrity

We are a curious group, excited by opportunities to better our grantmaking, public programs, internal culture, and community partnerships. We strive to be reflective, accountable, and ever-learning as we foster transparency across our organization and build opportunities for feedback.



# Strategic Priorities & Goals

## PRIORITY AREA 1:

### External Relations and Partnerships

#### GOAL 1:

We have a comprehensive plan to re-introduce HumanitiesDC to our current and historic partners and participants while also expanding our community to include more diverse relationships.

## PRIORITY AREA 2:

### Public Programming

#### GOAL 2:

We have built a purpose and foundation for public programming using an entrepreneurial approach.

## PRIORITY AREA 3:

### Community Grantmaking

#### GOAL 3:

We have a fully defined equitable, community-powered grantmaking practice that is transparent and provides holistic supports for humanities in the District.

## PRIORITY AREA 4:

### Internal Culture

#### GOAL 4:

Our board is a knowledgeable, integrated, and engaged part of organizational leadership.

#### GOAL 5:

The people who make up HDC experience a culture of satisfaction, authentic community relationship, and empowerment.

## PRIORITY AREA 5:

### Finance & Fundraising

#### GOAL 6:

Our fundraising, finances, and grants management are aligned with our mission and values.

# Strategic Priorities FY23-FY24

## PRIORITY AREA 1:

### External Relations and Partnerships

#### GOAL 1:

We have a comprehensive plan to re-introduce HumanitiesDC to our current and historic partners and participants while also expanding our community to include more diverse relationships.

#### OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES:

**OBJECTIVE 1A:** HumanitiesDC has strong brand awareness externally and a reputation as a trusted organization, funder, and partner.

- **STRATEGY 1.A.1** Fully frame out a communications plan and department focused on rebranding and community engagement.
- **STRATEGY 1.A.2** Undertake a multi-faceted communications campaign to introduce the newest iteration of HumanitiesDC's public programs and community grantmaking.
- **STRATEGY 1.A.3** Employ direct community engagement efforts to promote avenues for partnerships and individual interaction with the organization.

**OBJECTIVE 1B:** HumanitiesDC has clear definitions, roles, and expectations for various forms of external relationships and partnerships.

- **STRATEGY 1.B.1** Using information from strategic planning surveys, Humanities DC will define all external relationships in accordance with programming and engagement plans.
- **STRATEGY 1.B.2** Define approaches for HumanitiesDC leadership and team to build ongoing, sustainable external relationships.
- **STRATEGY 1.B.3** Clearly and publicly promote the various relationship opportunities that are available.

**OBJECTIVE 1C:** HumanitiesDC has 5-7 collaborating partners with whom we co-create program pilots and ongoing events.

- **STRATEGY 1.C.1** Identify and define the external partnerships to be established in the next 24 months.
- **STRATEGY 1.C.2** Cultivate organizational partnerships that support our mission, sustainability, and growth.

**OBJECTIVE 1D:** HumanitiesDC actively participates in the national humanities council community.

- **STRATEGY 1.A.1** Establish relationships with the Federation of Humanities Councils to start building our network, advocacy, and possible across-state collaborations.

PRIORITY AREA 2:

## Public Programming

### GOAL 2:

We have built a purpose and foundation for public programming using an entrepreneurial approach.

### OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES:

**OBJECTIVE 2A:** HumanitiesDC has designed and tested various public programs during FY 2023 as a baseline for mission-driven programming.

- **2.A.1** Develop and pilot anchor programs over the next two years that align with organizational mission, values, and capacity.
- **STRATEGY 2.A.2** Document best practices to create strong humanities-based programming using stakeholder engagement and feedback.

**OBJECTIVE 2B:** HumanitiesDC builds and finalizes its public programming through an iterative process of development and annual review.

- **STRATEGY 2.B.1** Adopt a design-thinking approach to evaluating current programs and implementing new ones between FY2023 and FY2024.
- **STRATEGY 2.B.2** Create connection between programming, finance, and development to ensure access to necessary resources.
- **STRATEGY 2.B.3** Ensure that the final public programs chosen offer more accessible points of entry to engage and collaborate with stakeholders.

**OBJECTIVE 2C:** HumanitiesDC has established a baseline for participation and effectiveness of public programs by FY 2024 for future planning.

- **STRATEGY 2.C.1** Review an environmental scan that includes other humanities councils and humanities-based organizations, to identify measures of program success.

PRIORITY AREA 3:

## Community Grantmaking

### GOAL 3:

We have a fully defined equitable, community-powered grantmaking practice that is transparent and provides holistic supports for humanities in the District.

### OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES:

**OBJECTIVE 3A:** HumanitiesDC grantmaking practices are considered transparent and accessible by stakeholders.

- **STRATEGY 3.A.1** Better define internally and externally the role that grantmaking plays in the organization's overall goals and efforts.
- **STRATEGY 3.A.2** Create more equitable and transparent grantmaking policies, procedures, and review processes.
- **STRATEGY 3.A.3** Ensure that the final grant areas chosen offer a wider group of applicants and grantees various points of entry.

**OBJECTIVE 3B:** HumanitiesDC has clear grantmaking cycles and purposeful grant offerings.

- **STRATEGY 3.B.1** Coordinate grantmaking calendar with other grantmaking institutions to develop a clear understanding of timing and grant offerings.
- **STRATEGY 3.B.2** Develop and establish consistent grantmaking offerings over the next 2 years.

**OBJECTIVE 3C:** HumanitiesDC has established a baseline for effectiveness of grantmaking by FY2024.

- **STRATEGY 3.C.1** Review an environmental scan that includes other humanities councils and humanities-based organizations, to identify measures of grantmaking success.
- **STRATEGY 3.C.2** Develop a method of feedback and implementation to support ongoing evaluation.

**OBJECTIVE 3D:** HumanitiesDC can demonstrate how the work of grantees impacts the humanities in DC.

- **STRATEGY 3.D.1** Collect and share publicly the impact of HumanitiesDC grantmaking annually.
- **STRATEGY 3.D.2** Explore opportunities to create convening and network building spaces for grantees. Another option is " Invest in tools and outreach to amplify grantee events. (ie the calendar)

PRIORITY AREA 4:

## Internal Culture

### GOAL 4:

Our board is a knowledgeable, integrated, and engaged part of organizational leadership.

### OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES:

**OBJECTIVE 4A:** The Board of Directors has set growth goals towards reflecting DC's residents and strengthening the group's skill set.

- **STRATEGY 4.A.1** Build a board that is representative of the whole city and able to collectively and individually respond to the organization's needs.
- **STRATEGY 4.A.2** Create tools to improve how individual board members are recruited and onboarded.

**OBJECTIVE 4B:** HumanitiesDC has a baseline defined for board member engagement and satisfaction.

- **STRATEGY 4.B.1** Create a baseline assessment template of board knowledge, confidence, and collective satisfaction.

**OBJECTIVE 4C:** Board members feel productive, confident, and invested in the organization and their collective and individual commitments to its growth.

- **STRATEGY 4.C.1** Refine guiding policies, procedures, and processes that define board and committee responsibilities, practice, and participation.
- **STRATEGY 4.C.2** Create tools to ensure board members are engaged during their tenures.

PRIORITY AREA 4:

## Internal Culture

### GOAL 5:

The people who make up HDC experience a culture of satisfaction, authentic community relationship, and empowerment.

### OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES:

**OBJECTIVE 5A:** HumanitiesDC staff feel productive, confident, and invested in the organization and understand the big picture of the organization and their role in it.

- **STRATEGY 5.A.1** Create tools to improve how staff are recruited, onboarded, and engaged during their tenures.
- **STRATEGY 5.A.2** Further develop the norms and culture around professional development and staff growth.
- **STRATEGY 5.A.3** Create opportunities for staff to feel empowered in the management of the organization.

**OBJECTIVE 5B:** HumanitiesDC has a baseline defined for staff engagement, satisfaction, and retention.

- **STRATEGY 5.B.1** Create a baseline assessment template of staff confidence, satisfaction, and understanding of the organization's mission/vision/values.

**OBJECTIVE 5C:** HumanitiesDC has an established compensation policy and review process.

- **STRATEGY 5.C.1** Work towards providing transparency in compensation and benefits offered to staff.

**OBJECTIVE 5D:** HumanitiesDC's culture and hiring process is inclusive and accessible.

- **STRATEGY 5.D.1** Have clear and public values statements available to people who are in relationship with HumanitiesDC (i.e. prospective hires, grant applicants, partners, participants).
- **STRATEGY 5.D.2** Ensure accessible and equitable employment opportunities through outreach, interview, and onboarding process.

## PRIORITY AREA 5: Finance & Fundraising

### GOAL 6:

Our fundraising, finances, and grants management are aligned with our mission and values.

### OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES:

**OBJECTIVE 6A:** HumanitiesDC knows and can demonstrate financial responsibility and stewardship.

- **STRATEGY 6.A.1** Establish an ethos and best practices around organizational spending that aligns with our values.
- **STRATEGY 6.A.2** Improve grants management processes to be more transparent and equitable.

**OBJECTIVE 6B:** HumanitiesDC has a sustainability plan that includes diversifying revenue streams and actively building a reserve.

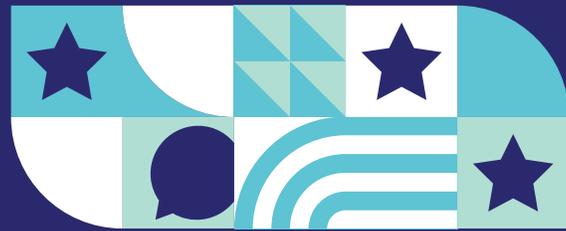
- **STRATEGY 6.B.1** Update accounting policies and procedures.
- **STRATEGY 6.B.2** Build a plan and process for reserve allocation and management with the board.
- **STRATEGY 6.B.3** Research and pursue collaborative funding opportunities with partners.
- **STRATEGY 6.B.4** Create an asset-based, time-bound fundraising plan.
- **STRATEGY 6.B.5** Invest in infrastructure and capacity for fundraising (ex. CRM, staff) to support a moves management process.

**OBJECTIVE 6C:** HumanitiesDC engages with and explores collaboration with DC agencies.

- **STRATEGY 6.C.1** Pursue advocacy opportunities that showcase the work of HumanitiesDC to the broader community.
- **STRATEGY 6.C.2** Review existing relationships with District officials and agencies.

# Strategic Planning Task Force

Name	Title	Affiliation
Rebecca Lemos-Otero	Executive Director	HumanitiesDC Staff
Jasper Collier	Project Manager, DC Oral History Collaborative	HumanitiesDC Staff
Lois Nembard	Director of Public Programming and Grantmaking	HumanitiesDC Staff
Karen Oliver	Director of Operations	HumanitiesDC Staff
Cole Fiala	Member, Secretary	HumanitiesDC Board
Maceo Thomas	Member, Board Chair	HumanitiesDC Board
Evelyn Boyd Simmons	Member, Treasurer	HumanitiesDC Board
Starsha Valentine	Consultant	Purpose Possible
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# HumanitiesDC

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