



## 2025 Oral History Interviewing - DC Oral History Collaborative Grant Request for Proposals (RFP)

**RFP Issued:** December 10, 2024

**Application Deadline:** February 18, 2025, at 5:59 PM

**Project Period:** May 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026. Funds must be spent during the project period (also known as the “grant period”).

**Maximum Award Amount:** \$8,000 (plus an additional \$5,000 may be requested for translation of transcripts)

**Grant type:** Program

### **About HumanitiesDC:**

Washington, DC, is a vibrant city rich in history, full of curious minds asking bold questions and sharing powerful stories. These narratives help us navigate the complexities of our past, present, and future. Through history, literature, language, religion, philosophy, and ethics, the humanities guide us in learning from our experiences, empathizing with different perspectives, and challenging our assumptions. Through storytelling and research, the humanities are a compass for interpreting what humans make and exploring what makes us human. Since 1980, HumanitiesDC has been one of 56 state councils supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, dedicated to making the humanities accessible to all. Through HumanitiesDC community grants and public programs, we celebrate, elevate, and connect the voices that bring our city to life.

### **Application Accessibility:**

If you are unable to access any application materials on our website or our grant management system, please contact the staff member listed below with a request for support, and provide as much detail as possible. HumanitiesDC is highly committed to becoming a more inclusive and accessible organization where everyone can participate fully in our grantmaking process.

### **Staff Contact:**

Hillary Steen, Community Grants Manager, [grants@humanitiesdc.org](mailto:grants@humanitiesdc.org)  
202.770.3077 x812

### **Applicant Eligibility:**

DC-based individuals, community groups, and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. Community groups must designate an individual to be the primary point of contact for the grant application and grant agreement.

### **Summary of Grant Opportunity:**

Help us preserve the unique stories of Washington, DC residents! This grant opportunity funds community organizations and individuals to conduct oral history projects that are then formally archived in the DC Public Library. Grantees will receive extensive training and guidance on how to conduct oral history interviews and what is involved in archiving them. We welcome applicants who have never conducted oral history interviews as well as those who are already



experts!

Potential projects may focus on neighborhoods, social organizations, political history, labor, faith-based groups, cultural trends, historic events, or other themes that lend themselves to oral history as a tool for research and preservation. Projects must be thematically focused on Washington, DC and have a theme, focus, or research question that applicants aim to illuminate. We are particularly interested this year in collecting oral history interviews on Go-Go music, DC's punk scene, the life and impact of Marion Barry, art spaces/history, and amateur/interscholastic sports to enhance DC Public Library's Special Collections. However, we continue to welcome proposals on all topics related to Washington, DC.

Your research topic can be based on a project you've worked on in other capacities, or it can be a brand-new project. If you want to continue an oral history project that was previously funded by HumanitiesDC, we encourage you to apply for a *Continuing Oral History Projects - DC Oral History Collaborative Grant* in Cycle II.

This opportunity is part of the Humanities Grant Program supported with funding from the District of Columbia Government through the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. This is also part of the DC Oral History Collaborative, a partnership between HumanitiesDC and the DC Public Library.

### **What is Oral History?**

"[Oral history is] distinguished from other forms of interviews by its content and extent. Oral history interviews seek an in-depth account of personal experience and reflections, with sufficient time allowed for the narrators to give their story the fullness they desire. The content of oral history interviews is grounded in reflections on the past as opposed to commentary on purely contemporary events" - from the [Oral History Association](#). Oral history interviewees are called "narrators."

### **About the DC Oral History Collaborative:**

The DC Oral History Collaborative (DCOHC) is a partnership between HumanitiesDC and the DC Public Library. It documents, preserves, and celebrates the lived experiences of all Washington, DC residents and communities through oral history. The Collaborative accomplishes this by providing training, mentorship, resources, programs, and funding to current and aspiring oral historians. *Oral History Interviewing* grantees become members of the Collaborative and join a dynamic cohort of oral historians.

### **Funding Scope:**

Successful *Oral History Interviewing* projects:

- Propose interviews connected to DC's communities, cultures, or histories.
- Clearly identify the research question driving the oral history inquiry, with the question going beyond the importance of collecting and archiving stories (e.g. "What stories about

community gardening are important to preserve?” becomes “How did the practice of community gardening change or evolve as gentrification took hold in Washington?”)

- Demonstrate a deep understanding of the subject matter and a connectedness to relevant communities that will lend itself to recruiting and actively engaging narrators
- Do not propose collecting oral history interviews that have already been recorded and archived in the DC Public Library. We encourage all applicants to review [DigDC](#), the online repository of DCOHC interviews, before submitting an application.
- Only request funding for collecting and archiving new oral history interviews. Grantees may budget a small portion of funds to host a small event to share the collected oral history interviews with narrators, but this grant is not for hosting public events, creating podcasts, or editing videos. See below for more allowable and unallowable costs.

If chosen for funding, applicants must commit to:

- Attending an in-person, three-session oral history training workshop on May 6, 8, and 12, 2025, at Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in downtown DC. This workshop will occur in the evening.
- Interviewing at least 5 people over the 8-month project period.
- Providing deliverables that are necessary for the DC Public Library archives, including an audio or video file of the interview recording, transcripts, indexes, release forms, and metadata. The release form will assign copyright of the oral history interviews to the DC Public Library, but the narrator will retain non-exclusive rights to copy, use, and publish their oral history in part or in full during their lifetime. All grantees will be trained in how to conduct oral history interviews and create these deliverables.

### **Translation Enhancements:**

As part of the effort to make the collected interviews as accessible as possible, applicants may request up to an additional \$5000 to translate the transcriptions of the oral history interviews they record as part of their grant project. These additional funds can be used to either translate transcripts into English or translate English transcripts into a language that will make the interviews more accessible to their narrators' communities. A request for a translation enhancement will neither negatively nor positively affect the competitiveness of an applicant's overall proposal. Acceptance of an applicant's proposal does not guarantee the acceptance of the applicant's request for a translation enhancement. HumanitiesDC does not provide recommendations for translators or translating companies.

### **Weighted Review Criteria**

Applications are reviewed and weighted based on the criteria below. The review process is explained in the *Application Review Process* section of this RFP.

- Capacity and Personnel - 10%  
The Project Director has a demonstrated passion to bring the project to completion. If other team members and collaborators are clearly identified, the reasoning for their

involvement is explained. An individual's role in different aspects of the project's planning, development, and/or implementation is explained.

- Contribution to DC History - 25%  
These preserved stories would be interesting to future researchers, residents, and the general public in learning about Washington, DC and its residents. The research topic might be hyperlocal or small in scope, but the interviews tell stories about life in our city.
- Project Description - 35%  
The scope of the area of interest/research topic is both clear and focused on a particular area. It is also clear why oral history is the ideal tool for the exploration of this inquiry.
- Community Collaboration - 30%  
The applicant demonstrates how the project would be strengthened through collaboration and community involvement. A recruitment plan for finding narrators is explained, and prospective narrators are identified. The applicant notes their own connection to the community. If they are not already connected, the applicant describes how they will forge these connections and why they chose this particular community.

#### **Cash Match Requirement:**

There is no matching requirement for this grant program. However, if the proposed activities cost more than the amount requested, applicants will be asked to describe other secured/planned funding sources in the application that will enable the proposed project to be completed.

#### **Eligibility Requirements:**

Individuals, community groups, and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for this grant. Individuals applying for this grant opportunity must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be a full-time resident of DC
- Provide proof of the above two requirements through a driver's license, passport, or other form of identification

Organizations applying for this grant opportunity must:

- Be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is registered and authorized to do business in Washington, DC with a physical mailing address in the District. DC residents should comprise most of its constituents.
  - The organization must be registered as either a "Domestic" entity (an entity that was incorporated in the District) or a "Foreign" entity (an entity that was incorporated in another state).
- Register and comply with the regulatory requirements of the following agencies:
  - Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP)



- District of Columbia Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR)
- District of Columbia Department of Employment Services (DOES)
- United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- Agree that by signing the conditions document and accepting the funds, they will comply with: (a) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which provides that grant recipients must take adequate steps to ensure that people with limited English proficiency receive the language assistance necessary to afford them meaningful access to grant-related programs, activities and services); (b) Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin); (c) Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex); (d) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; (e) the Americans with Disabilities Act (which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disabilities); (f) the Age Discrimination Act of 1973 (which prohibits discrimination against those 40 years or older); (g) the Labor Standards under Sections 5i and 7g of the National Foundation of the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965; and (h) the regulations issued pursuant thereto by the National Endowment for the Humanities (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Chapter XI)."

All applicants (individuals and organizations) applying for this grant opportunity must:

- Obtain a certification of "[Citywide Clean Hands](#)" from the District of Columbia Office of Tax and Revenue. This is required if the applicant is chosen for funding, but all applicants are encouraged to get this before applying. The certification must be dated no more than 30 days before it is sent to HumanitiesDC.
- Not appear on the DC Government's Excluded Parties [List](#) per the DC Office of Contracting and Procurement.
- Be in good standing with HumanitiesDC (no delinquent reports).
- Be able to provide proof of eligibility at any time during the grant period. Any awardees found ineligible after the award date must return all grant funds to HumanitiesDC.

Prohibited applicants include private clubs and organizations that prohibit membership based upon race, gender, color, religion, or any other classes identified in the District of Columbia Human Rights Act; for-profit (commercial) entities; political organizations; foreign governments; federal government entities; and District of Columbia government agencies.

**Note on Submitting Multiple Applications:**

If you are applying for the *Oral History Interviewing* grant, you may also apply for a *Community Culture and Heritage* grant, a *Visions – Projects + Events* grant, or a *Beyond the Archives* grant, however you may only receive one grant in Cycle I. If both applications are chosen for funding by the reviewers, the applicant must choose which award to accept.



**For Current or Former HumanitiesDC Grantees:**

Although the grant period for current 2024 grantees extends beyond the 2025 grant application deadline, 2024 grantees may apply for 2025 funding. However, if a 2024 grantee is awarded 2025 grant funding, the 2024 grant must be fully closed out before 2025 funds are distributed (interim and final reports submitted and approved, project has been completed, and all funds are spent or returned to HumanitiesDC). Any remaining unspent 2024 funds would be subtracted from the 2025 grant distribution.

If current or previous grantees are interested in continuing their already-completed DCOHC projects, we encourage you to apply for a *Continuing Oral History Projects - DC Oral History Collaborative Grant* in Cycle II. Those applications will open on March 4, 2025.

**Fiscal Sponsorship:**

Individuals requesting \$13,000 or less in grants funds don't have to apply through a fiscal sponsor but are encouraged to seek advice regarding the tax implications of receiving a grant award directly. Community groups without 501(c)3 non-profit status may apply through a 501(c)3 non-profit organization serving as a fiscal sponsor. HumanitiesDC does not provide tax advice.

A fiscal sponsor takes on all financial and legal obligations of the grant award. Fiscal sponsors may support no more than three HumanitiesDC grants at a time. Applicants applying through fiscal sponsors must use the fiscal sponsor's organization account within the HumanitiesDC grants portal to submit their application. If the fiscal sponsor does not have an account, an authorized official from the fiscal sponsor organization must create one. HumanitiesDC will endeavor to work primarily with the team conducting the project. However, because fiscal sponsor organizations have fiduciary and financial responsibility for their supported grants, it will be necessary for representatives from the fiscal sponsor to review and sign off on funding applications, financial documents, and grant agreements. No more than 10% of the grant award may be used to pay a fiscal sponsor.

Please note that the sponsored organization/individual must meet all eligibility requirements noted in this RFP - except for the 501(c)(3) requirement. For example, sponsored entities must be located in DC and cannot owe taxes to the DC government.

**Allowable Costs:**

100% of awarded grant funds must be applied to direct program costs. This may include salary, recording equipment/platforms, transcription services, and/or honoraria for individuals working on the project. Unallowable expenses include indirect costs/overhead, rent, utilities, administrative fees, food and beverages, entertainment, social activities, tuition and scholarships, debt reduction, re-granting, costs related to fundraisers and special events, expenses unrelated to the direct execution of the project, and funding to foreign or domestic government agencies.

In their final reports, grantees will be required to demonstrate, through documentation such as receipts, paid invoices, credit card or bank statements, payroll reports, and cancelled checks, all



expenses paid with HumanitiesDC funds. Grantees will be allowed to update their budgets during the project period, including after the required oral history trainings.

### **ADA Compliance and Accessibility:**

Successful applications will consider a broad definition of “accessibility” by addressing financial, geographic, demographic, cultural and developmental access. All organizational applicants must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The ADA provides civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities in the areas of employment, services rendered by state and local government, places of public accommodation, transportation, and telecommunication services. Organizations funded by HumanitiesDC must make reasonable accommodations to ensure that people with disabilities have equal physical and communications access as defined by federal law.

Applicant organizations with 15 or more full time employees must provide the following information in their application to demonstrate compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (42 U.S.C § § 12101 et seq.):

1. The process for formulating accessibility plans (e.g., creating an accessibility advisory committee, board and staff disability rights training, budgeting for reasonable accommodation requests, etc.).
2. The current process/status of an organization’s physical accessibility. If the location is not barrier-free, include in the grant application a plan for project/program modification that ensures access in a barrier-free environment, when needed.
3. The current progress/status of the organization’s accessibility in presenting activities – communications access (e.g., TDD, large print, or braille materials; audio description or assistive listening devices, ASL interpreted programs, etc.) and marketing/advertising.

For more information, applicants may access the complete text of the ADA here:

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/12101>. Note that neither HumanitiesDC nor the District of Columbia government represent that this link leads to the latest version of the subject law.

### **Technical Assistance for Applicants:**

HumanitiesDC will host general information sessions about all grant opportunities, as well as workshops specific to each grant program. These sessions will be recorded and available on our website. One-on-one office hours with staff will also be available. Applicants may also submit draft applications for review by staff. Details can be found in the [Grant Opportunities](#) section of our website.

### **How to Apply:**

HumanitiesDC grant applications are accepted via our online grants portal. This portal can be accessed at <http://grantapplication.wdchumanities.org>. Applications must be successfully submitted by 5:59 pm on the day of the deadline.



If you or your organization have applied for a HumanitiesDC grant before, please DO NOT create a new account. Instead, log into the grants portal with your existing account, with your email address serving as your username. Please contact the Grants Manager listed above if you need help accessing your account. More detailed instructions about the grants portal are found on our [website](#).

Applicants will receive a confirmation email when their proposals are successfully submitted. Applicants should contact the applicable HumanitiesDC staff member immediately should they encounter any technical issues or if they do not receive a confirmation email. Incomplete or late applications - or applications failing to meet the guidelines or eligibility requirements - will not be considered for funding.

HumanitiesDC will consider reasonable accommodation requests from applicants with disabilities to assist them in submitting grant applications via mail, email, or hand delivery. This request must be made at least five business days before the application deadline. To make a request for reasonable accommodation, please contact the Grants Manager identified at the beginning of this document.

HumanitiesDC reserves the right to change or rescind grant opportunities if we do not receive sufficient funds and/or if other unexpected situations occur. HumanitiesDC may accept or deny all applications submitted for funding if that is determined to be in the best interest of the organization.

#### **Application Review Process:**

- HumanitiesDC staff review all submitted applications for eligibility. Ineligible applicants are notified immediately and are allowed to appeal our decision.
- Eligible applications are reviewed by community members who have experience in humanities programming or scholarship in DC. Reviewers are trained by HumanitiesDC staff. They read and evaluate their assigned applications and convene for a group discussion. They then finalize their comments and individual scores, which are collated and averaged. Applications are funded based on the average scores they receive.
- Everyone involved in the review process is expected to remain impartial. HumanitiesDC requires that reviewers recuse themselves from the review of any application that presents a personal or professional conflict of interest.
- If you, or someone you know, are interested in being a grant reviewer, please [review the information on our website](#) to learn how to apply. You may be both an applicant and a grant reviewer, but you will not review applications for the same grant program you apply to.

#### **Notification and Payment of Awards:**

HumanitiesDC will notify applicants of their status (approved or denied) approximately eight





weeks after the application deadline. Grant awards are approved and certified in the grants portal and DocuSign. Awards are disbursed via direct deposit within a month after the acceptance form is correctly submitted. The full grant is typically awarded at the beginning of the grant period. If funding is not available at the beginning of the grant period, grants might be awarded in installments. Denied applicants may request a summary of grant reviewer comments.

### **Grant Award Terms:**

1. Recipients agree to document all grant expenditures.
2. Any changes to the scope, budget (greater than 25% in any one budget category), or project period must be requested in writing in advance.
3. Awardees are required to submit an interim report as described below. Failure to complete this report on time may result in intervention on the part of HumanitiesDC up to and including a request to return disbursed funds.
4. Awardees are required to submit a final report as described below. Failure to do so satisfactorily might affect eligibility for future grants.
5. To receive the grant award, approved applicants must sign and submit a Grant Agreement Form that constitutes a legally binding contract between HumanitiesDC and the new grantee. The signatory will be legally obligated to complete the project under the terms of the Grant Agreement Form.
6. Grantees will be required to send at least one member of their project team to a three-session oral history workshop that will be held on May 6, 8, and 12. Failure to send at least one team representative to each session may result in a grantee's award being rescinded.
7. Grantees will be required to submit at least 5 interview recordings each with a transcript, index, and a DC Public Library oral history release form. They are also required to fill out a "metadata spreadsheet" documenting and describing each interview, transcript, and index. Grantees will receive more information about how to complete this requirement as part of the training workshop. All deliverables are due on March 3, 2026.

### **Required Reports and Deliverables:**

The required interim and final reports are submitted through the grants portal. HumanitiesDC will review reports and deliverables and provide feedback within 30-60 days.

- The interim report will be due **September 15, 2025**. This report includes an explanation of funds spent and a brief overview of progress to date. Before this report deadline, all grantees will have one-on-one meetings with the Community Grants Manager and DCOHC Senior Manager to discuss projects. Additional check-in meetings may be scheduled for later in the project period.
- The final report will be due on **March 3, 2026**, which is 30 days after the end of the grant period. This report includes an explanation of funds spent, documentation of all



expenditures, and a project evaluation.

- All oral history-specific deliverables are due on **March 3** as well.

**Close Out:**

Grants are successfully closed when HumanitiesDC grant managers determine all grant requirements have been met, interim and final reports have been successfully completed, and all grant funds have been spent or returned to HumanitiesDC. Failure to achieve a successful grant closeout may result in loss of eligibility for future HumanitiesDC grants. Oral history-specific final products are also required, which will be submitted through TheirStory, an online oral history platform. More information will be provided.