HumanitiesDC

2025 General Operating Support Grant for Humanities Organizations
Request for Proposals (RFP)

RFP Issued: March 4, 2025
Application Deadline: May 1, 2025, at 5:59 PM
Project Period: July 1, 2025 – April 30, 2026. Funds must be spent during the project period (also known as the "grant period").
Grant Type: Non-Program
Maximum Award Amount: $25,000

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.

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 below.

Staff Contact: Leah Gage, Community Grants Manager, grants@humanitiesdc.org, 202.770.3077 x 815

Applicant Eligibility:
Humanities-focused, DC-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations with annual budgets of $2 million or less are eligible to apply. Budget size is determined by an organization's total cash expenses for the most recently completed fiscal year, as supported by the organization's IRS Form 990 or 990 EZ.

These organizations must have an explicit mission and track record of conducting programming in the humanities as a significant part of their work. We use the following definition of humanities: "The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study and interpretation of the following: 'language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.'" (National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

Organizations that occasionally tackle or delve into humanities-based themes or activities are not eligible for this grant. Organizations with a primary mission of creating or performing arts typically do not meet the definition of a humanities-focused nonprofit. Examples of eligible non-profit organizations may include community & cultural heritage organizations, museums, historic sites, preservation and historical societies, and education organizations with a significant humanities focus.

Organizations may not receive a General Operations Support grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities and this grant from HumanitiesDC within the same fiscal year.

Summary of Grant Opportunity
This grant opportunity provides general operating support funding to humanities-focused 501(c)(3) organizations in Washington, DC with budgets under $2 million. Rather than proposing a specific project, the applicant will describe their mission,

track-record and programming as an organization, community engagement, and significance to DC. 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.

Funding Scope:
General Operating Support funds can be used for almost any purpose that allows the organization to continue meeting its mission, with limited exceptions (see "Allowable Costs" below). Applicants will not identify a specific project but will be asked to describe how the grant funds will benefit their organization.

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.

Organization Profile and Programming (50%)

- The applicant organization's mission has an explicit humanities focus; the organization's programming and/or track record includes the humanities as a significant part of their work.
- The applicant demonstrates that their programming is successful and responds to the needs and desires of its core audience. They describe how they define and measure success and demonstrate that their programming has been successful; if a new organization, they include an explanation for their program model and a plan for evaluation.
- The applicant's work plays an important role in the humanities landscape of DC.

Community Outreach, Access, and Inclusion (50%)

- The applicant clearly defines and demonstrates an understanding of the community it serves.
- The applicant has programming and services that are inclusive and accessible. This includes, but isn't limited to, financial, geographic, demographic, cultural, and physical inclusion and accessibility.
- The applicant's leadership and staff represent its core audience and the community it serves. Or, the applicant offers a reasonable explanation for why it does not and/or includes plans to increase representation.

- The applicant describes effective methods to reach and engage its target community.

Cash Match Requirement:
There is no matching requirement for this grant program. Applicants may describe other secured or planned funding sources in the Budget Narrative section.

Eligibility Requirements:
Organizations applying for this grant 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)."
- 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. 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 (e.g., no delinquent reports).
- Not receive General Operating Support from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities in the same fiscal year.
- A humanities focus must be central to the mission and/or primary activities of the organization. Please refer to the "Applicant Eligibility" section for our definition of the term "humanities."
- Have an annual budget of $2 million or less as determined by total cash expenses for the most recently completed fiscal year.

Applicants may be asked at any time during the grant period to provide proof of eligibility. 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.

Fiscal Sponsorship

Fiscal sponsorships are prohibited for this grant. All applicants must be 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations.

Note on Submitting Multiple Applications

Eligible applicants may only submit one request for General Operating Support per year. General Operating Support applicants may also apply for and receive one 2025 program grant (i.e., Community Culture & Heritage, Oral History Interviewing, Continuing Oral History Projects, Beyond the Archives, or Visions – Projects + Events).

For Current HumanitiesDC Grantees:
Current 2024 grantees are eligible to 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.

Allowable Costs
This grant is intended to support general operating expenses, which may include salary, consulting fees, rent, utilities, information technology, administrative fees, or an operating reserve fund. Prohibited costs include food and beverages, entertainment, social activities, tuition and scholarships, debt reduction, re-granting, costs related to fundraisers and special events, and funding to foreign or domestic government agencies. **Grantees will be required to document - through materials such as receipts, paid invoices, credit card or bank statements, payroll reports, and cancelled checks - all expenses paid with HumanitiesDC funds in their final reports.**

ADA Compliance and Accessibility:
Applicant organizations with 15 or more full time employees 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 and/or that are applying for funding for public events 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.

Successful applications will consider a broad definition of "accessibility" by addressing financial, geographic, demographic, cultural and developmental access. 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 Potential Applicants:
HumanitiesDC has recorded general information sessions about all grant opportunities, which are currently available on our website. HumanitiesDC will also host workshops specific to each grant program. These sessions will be recorded and available on our website. Office hours with staff will be available for more individualized conversations. Details and frequently asked questions can be found in the Grant Opportunities section of our website.

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

If your organization has applied for a HumanitiesDC grant before, please do not create a new account. Instead, log into the online 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 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 and understand the role that HumanitiesDC plays in the city. 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 via 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 applicant's organization or fiscal sponsor. The signatory will be legally obligated to complete the project under the terms of the Grant Agreement Form.

Reporting:
The required interim and final reports are submitted through our online grants portal. Grants managers will review reports and provide feedback within 30 days.

- The interim report will be due **November 30, 2025.** This report includes an explanation of funds spent and a brief overview of progress to date.
- The final report will be due **May 30, 2026**. This report includes an explanation of funds spent and documentation of all expenditures.

Close Out:
Grants are successfully closed once grants managers approve the submitted final report. A complete final report demonstrates that funds were spent, the project is

completed, and there are no outstanding issues to address. Any unspent funds are returned to HumanitiesDC. Grantees risk losing eligibility for future grants if they fail to submit their reports and achieve a successful grant closeout.