

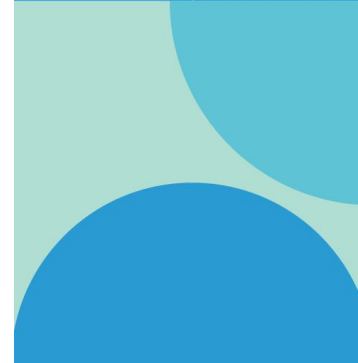
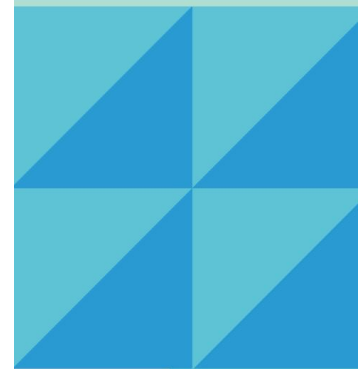


HumanitiesDC

HISTORY
LITERATURE
LANGUAGES
ETHICS
PHILOSOPHY
ARTS APPRECIATION

Outline

- Overview of HumanitiesDC and the humanities
- Overview of Visions – Projects + Events grant
- Timeline of grant review process
- Weighted review criteria
- Overview of scores and comments
- Evaluation questions
- General evaluation tips/instructions
- Implicit bias
- Timeline of post-review period



Who We Are



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- Oversees HumanitiesDC's grants portfolios
- Main point of contact for review process

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What We Do

At HumanitiesDC, we connect curious people with bold questions to the powerful stories of our vibrant city. Through our grantmaking and public programs we help build a community where all can engage in intellectual exchange, reflect on our connected stories and celebrate our various cultures.



- Public Programs – Community Journalism Program, Culture Series, DC Oral History Collaborative (DCOHC), Fellowships
- Community Grants - \$1M to 60+ grantees across 8 wards



What are the Humanities?

Human stories allow us to navigate the complexities of our past, present, and future. The humanities help us learn from history and literature, empathize through language and comparative religion, and challenge our assumptions with philosophy and ethics. They are a compass for interpreting what humans make and exploring what makes us human.

They help us understand...

- ❖ Our past, through history, anthropology, & archaeology
- ❖ Our story's public expressions, through literature, language, and art history/theory/criticism
- ❖ Our story's meaning, through ethics, philosophy, comparative religion, and the law

Link to the [National Endowment for the Humanities Definition](#)

Our Guiding Principles

- **Equity-driven:** We strive to center equity principles across our organization, internally and externally. This focus helps us broaden 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 act 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 Washington, DC stories, culture, and experiences, especially those traditionally marginalized or left out of mainstream narratives.
- **Acting with integrity:** We are a curious group, excited to always 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 mechanisms for feedback.

Visions - Projects + Events Grant

- Eligibility: DC-based nonprofit organizations. Interested individuals or informal groups must apply through a fiscal sponsor.
- Maximum Award: \$25,000
- Project Period: May 1, 2025 – April 30, 2026
- Projects connect the public with humanities research, knowledge and/or ideas. Although projects may be connected to national or global issues, the primary themes and audience are DC-based
 - Ex: documentary films, festivals or conferences, curricula, tours, exhibits
- [Link to RFP](#), [link to workshop recording](#)
- In 2025 we received 97 eligible Visions applications and will fund ~20

Grant Review Process

1. **Read list of assigned applications to see any conflicts of interest**
2. **Submit conflict of interest form**
3. **Read through each application (evaluation is only based on application, no outside info)**
4. **Write out quantitative scores and qualitative comments**
5. **Finish all evaluations by March 19 at 12pm**
6. **Virtual, required panel meeting.** Panel number and panel meeting date were provided in email from February 27. During this meeting, you'll discuss applications with others on your panel. After the meeting, you'll have 24 hours to revise evaluations based on the conversation.
7. **Revise evaluations (if necessary)**
8. **End of review period**



Deadline to Finish Reviews

**Wednesday, March 19
at 12pm (noon)**



Weighted Review Criteria

- Capacity and Personnel - 30%

The Project Director is capable of directing the project, as demonstrated by experience and how their role is defined in the application. The Humanities Scholar or Community Expert has relevant qualifications for the proposed project, and their role is clearly defined and lends legitimacy or intellectual authority to the project. 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.

- Project Description, Feasibility, and Timeline - 30%

The applicant has provided a clear and detailed description of the proposed project and its activities. The timeline is within the grant period and feasible. The project has a thematic connection to Washington, DC and is accessible to the public. There is a clear connection to the humanities. Achievable goals or impacts are described, and the applicant has a clear plan for assessing the project success.

Weighted Review Criteria, Cont.

- Community Collaboration and Public Engagement - 30%

The applicant demonstrates the project's significance to the DC community. The applicant has demonstrated how the project would be strengthened through collaboration and public engagement. There is a clear and effective plan for reaching and engaging the project's target audience. The project will be inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible (defined broadly to include financial, geographic, demographic, cultural and developmental accessibility); if a project is geared more for a particular demographic rather than the general public, this reasoning is clearly explained.

- Budget - 10%

The applicant clearly describes how funds will be used, and all expenses are directly tied to the proposed project activities. Budgeted expenses are allowable. (Unallowable expenses include food and beverages, tuition and scholarships, debt reduction, re-granting, and funding to foreign or domestic government agencies. If the applicant is using a fiscal sponsor: no more than 10% of the grant can go to the fiscal sponsor.)

Scores

- Scores are from 1 to 10, with 10 the highest possible score
- Scores must match comments!
- Staff will calculate weights of your scores. If you want to do these calculations, you can plug your scores into the score calculators included in each evaluation form. Staff will use these same formulas in our own calculations.
- Staff will send out final, weighted scores before the panel meeting
- Staff mostly use the scores to determine grantees

Comments

Comments:

1. justify/match scores
2. help staff with funding decisions
3. are given to applicants if requested

Comments, cont.

Effective comments are:	Poor comments:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concise, easy-to-read and understand• Presented in constructive manner• Specific to individual proposal• Reflect your experience and expertise• Realistic about capacity of applicant• Highlight application's strengths and identify areas for improvement• Relevant to each section of the application being reviewed• Analyze rather than summarize or paraphrase	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make derogatory remarks• Question applicant's honesty or integrity• Offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information• Offer limited explanation or detail• Reflect personal biases• Penalize an applicant because you feel the organization does not need the money• Copied over or summarized applicant's answer without analyzing• Comments don't reflect scores

Time for the evaluation questions!

Link: [How to access/review evaluations in grants portal](#)

Introduction, Instructions, Reviewer Panel

Scoring Guide:

- 9-10: Proposal has *ideal* responses for the stated criteria. A truly outstanding fit in most, if not all, respects.
- 7-8: Proposal has *good* responses. Answers are strong overall, though possibly raise a few concerns.
- 4-6: Proposal has *adequate* responses. Answers have strengths, but they don't meet the highest standards outlined in the review criteria.
- 1-3: Proposal has *unsatisfactory* responses. Answers don't sufficiently address the questions.

Remember to note your reviewer panel on each evaluation!

Evaluations should be primarily based on applicant's responses to the listed questions at the top of each weighted section, but also review the rest of the application for more context.

Capacity and Personnel

- Project director in charge of overall project, shapes goals and activities. Might be hands-on and/or delegates to others.
 - Ex) background in project management, leadership, or with direct experience in project output
- Team and collaborators work with project director on overall project or specific tasks. Not required!
 - Ex) multimedia expert, assistant, exhibit curator
- Humanities scholar/community expert is knowledgeable about the proposed subject matter to inform the project design, implementation, and/or evaluation. Academic, life, professional experience, etc.
 - Ex) college professor, knows everyone on the block, research experience

Does it make sense why these people were chosen to work on the project? Are their backgrounds relevant? Are their roles explained? Any kind of expertise missing, or roles not mentioned that should be?

Activities

- Is the project compelling?
- Is the project connected to DC?
- Will the project be publicly accessible?
- Will the team be able to get enough information/access to do the project?
 - Ex) archival access, event permits
- Are the activities clearly outlined and relevant to the project?
- Will funded activities only happen during the grant period?
- Does the timeline make sense? Is it too ambitious, or too vague?

Connection to the Humanities

- Is there a clear connection to the humanities?
- Prompts we give applicants are below. They might not answer every question:
 - How will you use the humanities to support DC residents' efforts to explore and navigate the history, culture, relationships and topics that shape our community?
 - Why did you choose to explore these humanities disciplines?
 - How do the humanities help you or your project ask or answer big questions that help us understand our world?
 - How do the humanities enable your project to make connections or build empathy across communities?
 - How will the humanities allow your project to challenge assumptions about DC or its residents?
 - Additional connections or contributions to the discipline

Measuring Success

- Did the applicant note how they'll assess the project's success? How clear is this plan?
- Are the goals/impacts of the project achievable?

- Applicants decide for themselves what success looks like and how to measure it

Community Collaboration and Public Engagement

- Has the applicant demonstrated the project's significance to the DC community?
 - Ex) not just a festival that takes place in the city, but includes DC filmmakers and engages a DC-based audience
- If organizational partners are identified, do they fulfill key roles?
 - Ex) marketing firm
- Are partners/collaborators mentioned specifically, or referred to generally? (Ex: “will reach out to community organizations” vs. naming specific organizations and their roles.)
- How accessible is the project? Why is this project geared to this target audience?
- Does the outreach strategy make sense?
- Can the target audience really be engaged in the project?
 - Ex) q+a sessions, survey feedback

Budget Clarity and Allowability

- Does the applicant explain the budget clearly?
Ex) these funds will pay the project director and curator
- Are there any unallowable expenses?
- Lump sums are ok, some applicants provide calculations

Allowable/Unallowable Costs

The grant program CAN fund:

Salary/wages

Stipends/honoraria

Project supplies and equipment

Virtual presenting platforms

Space rental

Project transportation

Project publicity and promotion

Fiscal sponsor (up to 10% of award)

The grant program CANNOT fund:

- Any non-program-related costs
- General office supplies
- Rent, overhead/indirect, utilities, restoration
- Food and beverages/entertainment/social activities/fundraisers
- Tuition and scholarships
- Debt reduction
- Re-granting
- Funding to government agencies

Optional Comments

- Additional Comments for Applicant: overall thoughts or suggestions, would also be shared with applicant if they request comments
- Additional Comments for HumanitiesDC: will not be shared with applicant. This is to note general or specific thoughts/concerns/questions just for staff about the application

Application Questions Not Visible to Reviewers

- How applicant found out about grant opportunity
- Previous grants experience with HumanitiesDC
- Contact info other than the applicant's
- Proof of age/DC residency for individuals being sponsored
- Fiscal sponsor letter of confirmation
- Accessibility section
- Authorized signature

General Tips/Instructions

- Start evaluations as early as possible to finish by deadline. You'll have time after the panel meeting to revise scores/comments. Tell us as early as possible if you need to drop out.
- Don't be overly harsh or provide too much leeway, which is a tricky balance!
- Be honest. If you truly believe that an applicant's response is "amazing" or "terrible", reflect that in your score/comment. Don't be concerned about how many projects we can fund.
- Don't compare applications to each other; each application should be reviewed as standalone
- Don't conduct your own research about an applicant/project; focus on what's in the application
- Look for consistency throughout the application. Ex) if a specific activity is mentioned in the description, is it referred to in the timeline? Reflected in the budget?



Implicit Bias

- Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding in an unconscious manner.
- Activated involuntarily, without awareness or intentional control. Can be either positive or negative. Everyone is susceptible

How implicit bias can influence your review:

- Prior knowledge or experience with applicant (not necessarily conflict of interest)
- Personal experience with project's content, history, location, audience, etc.
- Thoughts about writing style, polished “good grammar”
- Opinions on sex/gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, disability, etc., as well as project content

Implicit Bias, cont.

To limit implicit bias:

- You are a reviewer, not a critic
- Focus on content of application as written
- Frame comments as recommendations
- Don't compare applications to each other
- Adhere to review criteria

[Chicago Beyond Mirror Tool](#): resource to help recognize bias during reviews

Post-Review Period

- Staff discussion to choose highest-scored applications in each panel up to how much budgeted for each grant program
- Staff review of likely grantees, including budget review, Guidestar/Charity Navigator, internet search for news, concerns from reviewers
- During staff review, slate sent to board with overview of full review process. Board votes on process, NOT grantees.
- Grant acceptance and disbursement process, and full list of grantees sent to reviewers
- **\$125 honorarium per grants cycle to reviewers who submit all evaluations before the deadline (March 19 at noon) AND attend the panel meeting. More information to come.**





HumanitiesDC

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