



2026 Community Culture & Heritage Grant Request for Proposals (RFP)

RFP Issued: December 8, 2025

Application Deadline: February 18, 2026 by 5:59 pm

Project Period: May 1, 2026 - April 30, 2027. Funds must be spent during the project period (also known as the “grant period”).

Maximum Award Amount: \$10,000

Applications must be submitted online [at this link](#).

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.

Access and Equal Opportunity:

Persons needing reasonable accommodations to access HumanitiesDC applicant support materials or applications may contact the staff person listed below to request assistance. Requests for reasonable accommodations should be received at least 10 business days before the application due date.

HumanitiesDC staff will respond to requests for reasonable accommodations within 5 business days.

Staff Contact: Leah Gage, Community Grants Manager, grants@humanitiesdc.org, 202.770.3077 x815

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. Fiscal sponsorships are allowed for all applicants who are eligible to apply (see *Fiscal Sponsorship* and *Eligibility Requirements* sections for more details).

Summary of Grant Opportunity:

Calling all local historians, culture-bearers, and humanists who wish to capture and preserve the culture and

narratives of their local communities through public humanities projects! Help to illuminate the culture and narratives of your local DC community through grassroots public humanities projects. The *Community Culture & Heritage* grant aims to cultivate grassroots interpretations of DC history and culture by funding projects focused on DC culture, recording the memories and experiences of long-time Washingtonians, and/or capturing the unfolding stories of newer residents for future generations. Examples of these projects include, but are not limited to, short videos or films, panel discussions, educational materials or lesson plans, walking tours. Ultimately, we are seeking creatively designed projects that will be completed by the end of the project period.

In Spring 2027, grantees will present their projects at an annual Community Showcase event hosted by HumanitiesDC. This public, community-based event is an opportunity to connect with other *Community Culture & Heritage* grantees and share your work with the greater DC humanities community.

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:

Community Heritage & Culture projects must include a thematic connection to Washington, DC society, culture, history, and/or its residents. While projects may connect to national or global issues, the primary themes and intended target audience should be DC-based. Successful projects will demonstrate how the targeted community will benefit from the project and be actively involved in its creation. Projects must be inclusive, equitable, and publicly accessible to DC residents. By the end of the grant period, each project will conclude with a final product intended for public consumption, such as a written publication, documentary short film, website, lesson plan, event, tour, or other public product. Successful projects will be innovative, unique, and/or of strong interest to a public audience. *Community Culture & Heritage* grantees showcase their projects annually in an event hosted by HumanitiesDC, to be held in Spring 2027. Projects must be rooted in one or more humanities disciplines. We use the following definition of the 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 \(NEH\)](#))

Projects must also include a humanities scholar or community expert who is knowledgeable about the proposed subject matter to inform the project design, implementation, and/or evaluation. Humanities scholars may have formal training and academic experience in the humanities and/or lived experience through their personal or community heritage as a culture bearer, public humanities practitioner, or community historian. In some cases, it may make sense for the Project Director to also serve as the Humanities Scholar, but this should be explained in the application.

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.

- Project Description, Feasibility, and Timeline - 25%
The applicant has provided a clear and detailed description of the proposed project and its activities. The timeline for completing the public-facing project is within the grant period and feasible. 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.
- Connection to DC - 25%
The applicant demonstrates the project's significance to the DC community. There is a strong thematic connection to Washington, DC broadly, or to specific communities, neighborhoods, or stories.
- Public Engagement - 25%
There is a clear and effective plan for the project to reach and engage 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.
- Capacity and Personnel - 15%
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.
- 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 an organization's general operation expenses, food and beverages, tuition and scholarships, debt reduction, re-granting or sub-granting, costs related to fundraisers or lobbying, funding to foreign or domestic government agencies, and any other expenses unrelated to the direct execution of the project. If the applicant is using a fiscal sponsor: no more than 10% of the grant can go to the fiscal sponsor.)

Eligibility Requirements:

Please direct questions or concerns about eligibility requirements to the staff contact listed on page 1. Individuals, community groups, and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for this grant.

Individuals applying for these grant opportunities must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be a full-time resident of DC as demonstrated by a physical home address located in the District of

Columbia

- Provide proof of the above two requirements through a current driver's license, passport, or other documentation for proof of age and proof of residency (i.e., current utility bill or bank statement)

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).
 - The Organization must have its principal physical business office address located in the District of Columbia. Applicants shall not use Post Office boxes.
- 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 (organizations and individuals) applying for these grant opportunities must:

- Obtain a certification of "[Citywide Clean Hands](#)" from the District of Columbia Office of Tax and Revenue. Applicants are encouraged to review the requirements before applying to ensure they can get this certificate. If an applicant is chosen for funding, they must submit the certification alongside the Grant Agreement Form.
- The certification must be dated no more than 30 days before it is submitted, and must be submitted to HumanitiesDC within 2 weeks of their award notification.

- Not appear on the [DC Government’s Excluded Parties List](#) per the DC Office of Contracting and Procurement.
- Be in good standing with HumanitiesDC
 - Note: a HumanitiesDC grantee that has failed to comply with HumanitiesDC policies (e.g., grant reporting) may not be in “good standing” and may be ineligible to receive additional funds.
- 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.
- Submit the application through our [grants portal](#).

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 *Community Culture and Heritage* grant, you may also apply for the *Oral History Interviewing* grant. However, grantees 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. You may not apply for a *Visions – Projects & Events* grant if you are also applying to the *Community Culture and Heritage* grant program.

For Current HumanitiesDC Grantees:

Current grantees may apply for 2026 funding even if they have not yet closed out an open grant. However, if they are approved for 2026 grant funding, any open grants -must be fully closed out and the grantee must remain in good standing before any new funds are distributed (interim and final reports submitted and approved, project has been completed, and all funds are spent or returned to HumanitiesDC). HumanitiesDC reserves the right to subtract any unspent or unaccounted for 2025 grant spending from new grant distribution.

Fiscal Sponsorship:

A fiscal sponsor is a non-profit organization that assumes financial and legal obligations for an individual or organization. In the case of HumanitiesDC’s community grants, individuals and community groups without 501(c)3 non-profit status are eligible for the *Community Culture & Heritage* grant and are not required to apply through a fiscal sponsor.

Fiscal sponsors must be registered in DC and 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 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 Expenses:

100% of awarded grant funds must be applied to direct program costs. This may include salary, consulting fees, honoraria/stipends, recording equipment/platforms, transcription services, space and equipment necessary to complete the project, and any other project or program-related expenses. Grantees will be allowed to update their budgets during the project period, and more guidance will be provided.

Unallowable expenses include an organization's general operation expenses, food and beverages, tuition and scholarships, debt reduction, re-granting or sub-granting, costs related to fundraisers or lobbying, funding to foreign or domestic government agencies, and any other expenses unrelated to the direct execution of the project. **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.**

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.

ADA Compliance:

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 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 of 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 progress/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, interpreted performances, 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.

Accessibility:

We ask all applicants – even those who are not required to provide the information noted in the above *ADA Compliance* section – to demonstrate how grant-funded programming and services will be inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible throughout DC. Successful applications will consider a broad definition of “accessibility”, such as financial, geographic, demographic, cultural, and/or developmental access.

Technical Assistance for Applicants:

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

How to Apply:

HumanitiesDC grant applications are accepted via our online grants portal, which can be accessed [at this link](#). 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.

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 10 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.

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.

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 and/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.

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.

Grant Award Terms:

1. Grantees take on all financial and legal obligations of the grant award.
2. Grantees agree to document all grant expenditures.
3. Any changes to the scope, budget (greater than 25% in any one budget category), or project period must be requested in writing in advance.
4. Grantees 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.
5. Grantees are required to submit a final report as described below. Failure to do so satisfactorily might affect eligibility for future grants.
6. 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 the grants portal. Grants managers will review reports and provide feedback within 60 days.

- Grantees will have a required interim check-in call with grants managers between **October 1 and November 15, 2026**. During this interim call, grantees are expected to provide an update of progress-to-date and describe any expenses as well as changes to the project scope. Questions will be provided to grantees in advance; calls must be completed by November 15, 2026.
- The final report will be due on **May 30, 2027**, 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.

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.