



HumanitiesDC

HISTORY
LITERATURE
LANGUAGES
ETHICS
PHILOSOPHY
ARTS APPRECIATION

Visions – Projects & Events Workshop: January 16, 2026

Outline

- HumanitiesDC
- *Visions – Projects & Events* grant overview and example
- Room introductions
- Grant specifics
- Application questions
- Components of a successful application and common issues
- Review process
- Q&As throughout!

Who We Are



Hillary Steen

Community Grants Manager

- Oversees HumanitiesDC's grants portfolios
- Main point of contact for Visions grant-related questions

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Leah Gage

Community Grants Manager

- Oversees HumanitiesDC's grants portfolios;
- Additional point of contact for grant-related questions

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Lois Nembhard

Director of Grantmaking + Programs

- Oversees HumanitiesDC's Community Grants and Public Programs

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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.

- Curated Public Programs – Community Journalism, Culture Series, DC Oral History Collaborative (DCOHC), Fellowships
- Community Grants – ~\$900,000 to 50+ grantees across 8 wards; ~15 Visions grantees



2026 Grant Cycles

Cycle I: Due February 18, 2026, by 5:59 pm

**Community
Culture &
Heritage**

**Oral History
Interviewing -
DCOHC**

**Visions -
Projects +
Events**

Cycle II: Opens March 3, due May 1, 2026, by 5:59 pm

**Beyond the
Archives -
DCOHC**

**Continuing Oral
History Projects -
DCOHC**

**General
Operating
Support**

<https://humanitiesdc.org/grant-opportunities/>

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](#)

Visions – Projects + Events (Cycle I)

- Eligibility: DC-based nonprofit organizations. Interested individuals or informal groups must apply through a fiscal sponsor.
- Maximum Award: \$25,000
- Project Period: May 1, 2026 - April 30, 2027
- Public-facing projects connecting to humanities scholarship, cultural research, knowledge and ideas through public interpretations, including documentaries, festivals, conferences, curricula, exhibits, etc.
- Applications close February 18, 2026 at 6:00 pm
- PoC: Hillary

[Link to RFP](#)

Story District

Black Journalists: Stories Behind the Headlines



Who You Are

- Name
- Organization Affiliation (if any)
- Tell us a little about the project you're considering

Humanities Scholar

- Certain projects must include a humanities scholar who is knowledgeable about the proposed subject matter to inform the project design, implementation, and/or evaluation. 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.
- Scholars may have formal training and academic/professional experience in the humanities and/or lived experience through their personal or community heritage as a culture bearer, public humanities practitioner, or community historian. They lend legitimacy or intellectual authority to the project
- Required for: *Community Culture & Heritage*, *Visions - Projects & Events*, and *Beyond the Archives - DCOHC*

Allowable/Unallowable Costs

The grant program CAN fund:

- Salary/wages
- Stipends/honoraria
- Consulting Fees
- Recording equipment
- Virtual presenting platforms
- Space rental
- Project supplies and equipment
- Project transportation
- Project publicity and promotion
- Fiscal sponsor (up to 10% of award)

The grant program CANNOT fund:

- Any non-program-related costs
- General operation expenses (rent, overhead/indirect, utilities)
- General office supplies
- Food and beverages
- Tuition and scholarships
- Debt reduction
- Re-granting
- Funding to government agencies

Fiscal Sponsorship

- Individuals or community groups without 501(c)3 non-profit status MUST apply through a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as a fiscal sponsor
- Fiscal sponsors assume all financial and legal obligations:
 - Application submission
 - Funding acceptance
 - Interim and final report submissions
- No more than 10% of the grant award may be used to pay a fiscal sponsor
- Applicants applying through fiscal sponsors must use the fiscal sponsor's organization account within our grants portal
- Eligibility requirements noted in RFP still apply to the fiscal sponsors

Required Reports

- Interim report due November 1, 2026: explanation of funds spent and brief overview of progress to date.
- Final report due May 30, 2027: Report includes explanation of funds spent, documentation of all expenditures, and a project evaluation

Q&A Break

Weighted Review Criteria

Project Description, Feasibility, and Timeline - 25%

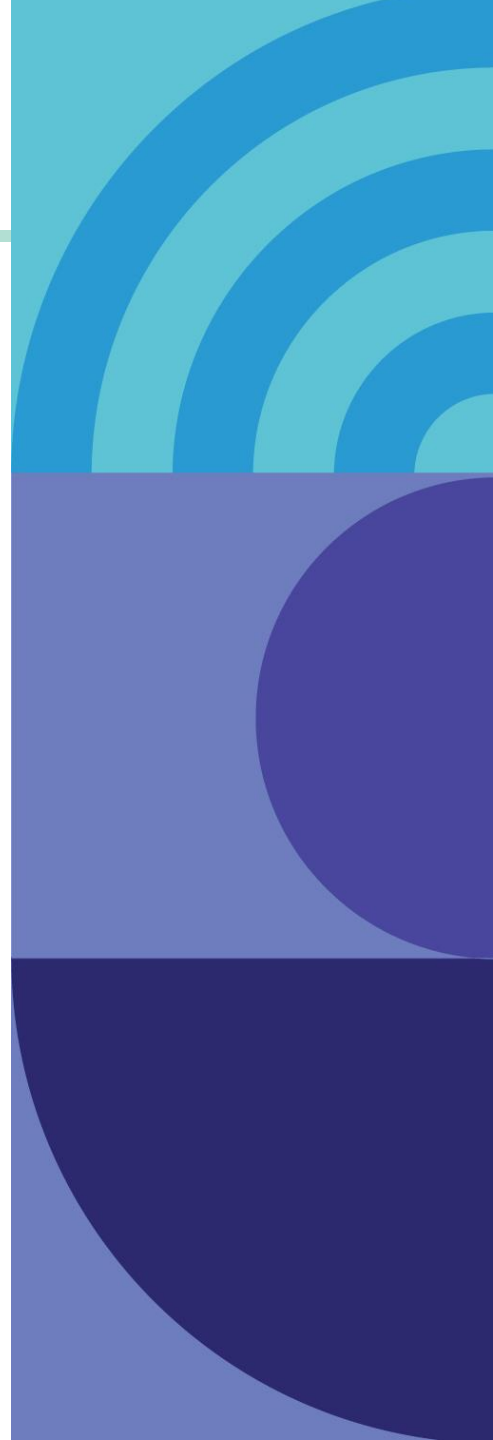
The applicant has provided a clear and detailed description of the proposed project and its activities. The timeline is within the grant period and feasible. There is a clear connection to the humanities. Achievable goals or impacts are described, and the applicant has a clear plan for assessing the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



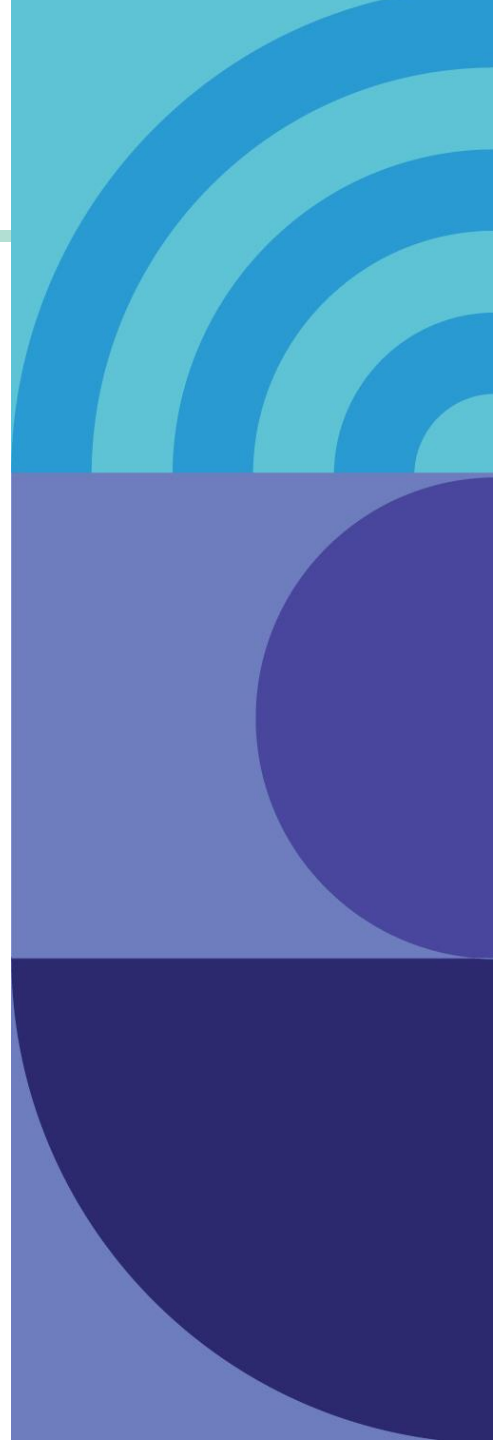
Weighted Review Criteria, Cont.

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 identified, their roles in different aspects of the project's planning, development, and/or implementation are 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.



Key Application Questions

Grants portal instructions

Applicant Information

- This grant is only for organizations
- Fiscal sponsors submit application on behalf of sponsored entity (and sign submitted application)

Project Description, Feasibility, and Timeline

- Details! This is where you explain what the project actually entails
- HumanitiesDC funds can ONLY be spent during project period: May 1, 2026 - April 30, 2027
- Explain WHY your project focuses on the chosen humanities discipline(s)
- You define what "success" means

Key Application Questions, Cont.

Connection to DC

- Why not do this project somewhere else? What makes DC the best geographic area for this project?
- Does it just take place in the city, or does it really connect with local residents/culture/history/etc.?
- Entire city vs. specific communities, neighborhoods, or stories
- What makes your project important or interesting to DC residents specifically?

Public Engagement

- External piece, the "public" in "public-humanities"
- How will the public learn about the project? Will you work with anyone outside your organization?
- Name potential partners who will help with outreach and methods of contacting them. What will they do? Don't need a final list of partners in application, but at least thoughtful ideas
- Target audience can be as broad or narrow as you want, just explain why

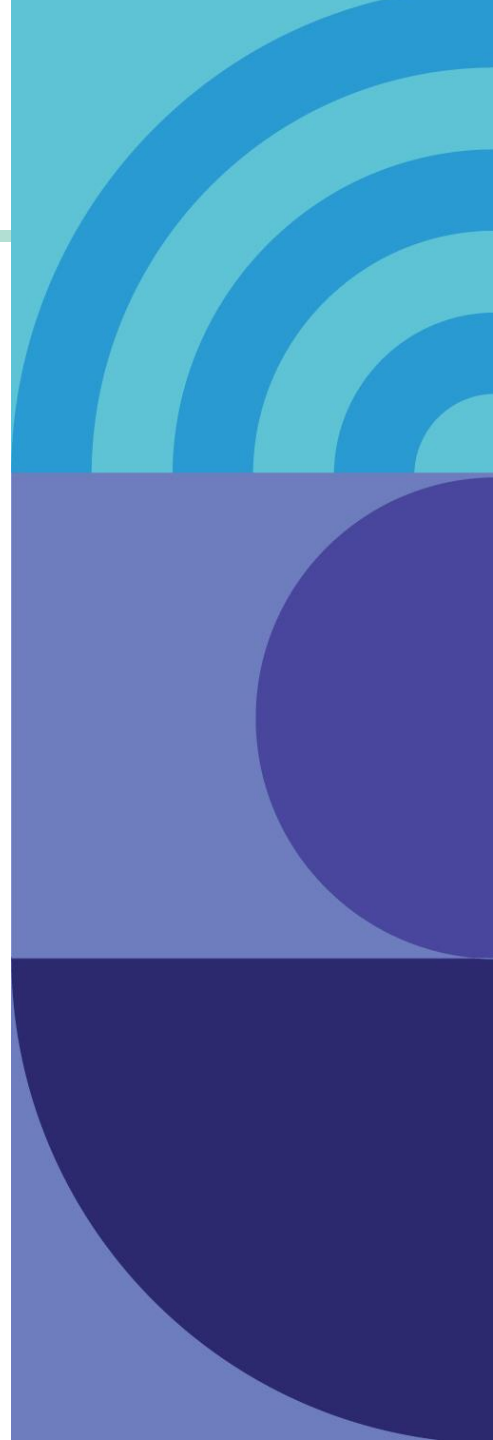
Key Application Questions, Cont.

Capacity and Personnel

- Project director has experience/interest with project topic professionally or personally. They are the driver of the project activities and usually the point of contact.
- Don't necessarily need team members, but projects benefit from this (so project director doesn't do everything themselves, community buy-in, etc.)
- Humanities scholar is chosen thoughtfully. Explain how they are knowledgeable about the relevant field/subject matter and their role in the project.

Budget

- There must be a dollar amount in every cell of the "HumanitiesDC Grant Funds" column. If you do not want to budget funds in a certain budget category, write 0 (zero).
- DETAILS for budget narrative. Explain each budget category by line item, provide equations as needed for more complicated calculations (like salaries). Don't have contingency/unplanned/unexplained expenses.
- Can redirect funds as project progresses, budget is only a plan



Key Application Questions, Cont.

ADA Compliance

- Required if organization has 15+ staff members AND/OR you're hosting a public event

Appendix

- Supports application, not brand-new info (unless want to provide video responses to questions)
- Keep documents relatively short
- If you want to add website, social media, etc. you can do so here

Q&A Break

Successful Applications

- Strong connection to the humanities and DC residents
- Scholar is identified and their qualifications are relevant to the project, they have a clear role
- Specific ideas and explanations for community partners, team members, and outreach
- Timeline is realistic and within the grant period
- Thoughtful ways to manage success
- Well-organized and clear budget explanation without unallowable costs
- DETAILED

Common Application Issues

- No explanation of importance of project to DC residents
- Activities seem unrelated to purpose of project
- Unclear descriptions of partnerships and team involvement/selection
- Scholar seems unqualified
- Timeline is too vague
- Budget is not justified in budget narrative
- Looks like application was written in a rush
- NOT DETAILED

Application Review Process

- All submitted applications reviewed by HumanitiesDC staff for eligibility, and then assigned to panels/groups of reviewers
- Reviewers - community members with strong ties to humanities in DC
 - They score applications based on review criteria (available in RFP and application)
- Staff review of likely grantees
- HumanitiesDC's Board affirms review process was followed
- Funding decisions are sent out approximately ten weeks after application deadline
- Grantees receive funds approximately two weeks after notification
- Interested in reviewing applications? [Check out our website!](#) You may be both an applicant and a grant reviewer, but you would not review applications for the same grant program you apply to.
- Reviewer PoC: Hillary

Resources & Assistance

- Additional overview and grant-specific workshops listed below.
- [Sign up for virtual office hours](#)
- FAQ, sample application responses, and draft review also available
- Leah Gage – lgage@humanitiesdc.org
- Hillary Steen – hsteen@humanitiesdc.org

**Scan for all upcoming
info sessions**



General Info Sessions

- [Recording on website](#)
- [January 20 at 5:30pm](#)
(virtual)

Grant Program Workshops (all virtual)

- Cycle I workshop recordings will go on website soon!
- Cycle II in the spring



HumanitiesDC

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