



## 2026 General Operating Support Grant for Humanities Organizations Request for Proposals (RFP)

**RFP Issued:** March 3, 2026

**Application Deadline:** May 1, 2026, by 4:59 PM

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

**Grant Type:** Non-Program

**Maximum Award Amount:** \$25,000

**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](mailto:grants@humanitiesdc.org), 202.770.3077 x815

## What are the Humanities?

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 \(NEH\)](#)). In short, the humanities allow us to explore and understand the human experience.

## 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, meaning more than half of the organization’s previous year’s programming must be devoted to the humanities. Newly-founded organizations without a programming track-record should be prepared to demonstrate planned programming. Please refer to the section above, “What are the Humanities?” for more clarification.

Examples of eligible non-profit organizations may include community and cultural heritage organizations, museums, historic sites, preservation and historical societies, and education organizations with a significant humanities focus. Organizations that occasionally tackle or delve into humanities-based themes or activities are not eligible for this grant. Organizations with a primary mission, focus, or whose programming is dedicated to creating visual art, dance, theater, or music, as well as organizations focused on social services, health, or general education typically do not meet the definition of a humanities-focused non-profit and thus are not eligible for this grant.

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, 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 scored based on the criteria below. The review process is explained in the *Application Review Process* section of this RFP.

#### ***Humanities Mission & Programming – 30%***

The organization’s mission has an explicit humanities focus, and the majority of the organization’s programming is dedicated to the humanities. The applicant demonstrates that programs are successful or impactful; success or impact is clearly defined, and the applicant describes how success is measured.

#### ***Public Engagement – 15%***

The organization demonstrates a clear and effective plan for defining, reaching, and engaging with its target audience. Programming is or will be inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible (defined broadly to include financial, geographic, demographic, cultural and developmental accessibility).

#### ***Significance to DC – 20%***

The organization’s mission and programming are significant to the DC community, as demonstrated by the unique role of the organization’s humanities programming in DC, whether the organization reaches underserved or underrepresented DC communities, or other relevant criteria as presented by the applicant.

#### ***Capacity and Personnel - 15%***

The organization's team and collaborators, whether staff or volunteer, are well-positioned to carry out the work of the organization. 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.

### ***Intended Use of Funds – 20%***

There is a demonstrated need and compelling plan for the use of the funds. The applicant provides a compelling response for how grant funds will contribute to, support, and/or grow the organization and its work.

### **Eligibility Requirements:**

Please direct questions or concerns about eligibility requirements to the staff contact listed on page 1. Only DC-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. Interested individuals, community groups, and fiscal sponsors are not eligible for this grant.

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).”

- Have an annual budget of \$2 million or less as determined by total cash expenses for the most recently completed fiscal year.
- A humanities focus must be central to the mission and primary activities of the organization. Please refer to the “Applicant Eligibility” section for our definition of the term “humanities.”

All applicants applying for this grant opportunity 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.

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.

### **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 2026 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 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.

### **Allowable Expenses**

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, tuition and scholarships, debt reduction, re-granting or sub-granting, costs related to fundraisers or lobbying, 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.** Grantees will be allowed to update their budgets during the project period if needed, and more guidance will

be provided.

### **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 hosted general information sessions about all grant opportunities, and you may find the recording and slides [on our website](#). We also host 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, as well as the organization's website and recent online presence. 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 ten 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 final reports are submitted through the [grants portal](#). Grants managers will review reports and provide feedback within 60 days.

- The interim report will be due **November 30, 2026**. This report includes an explanation of funds spent and a brief overview of progress to date.
- The final report will be due **May 30, 2027**. This report includes an explanation of funds spent and documentation of all expenditures.

### 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.