

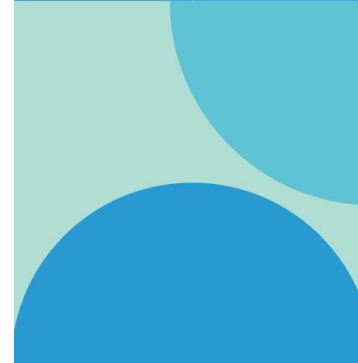
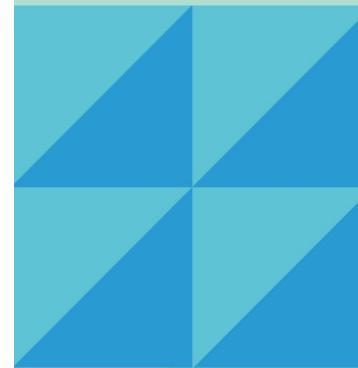


HumanitiesDC

HISTORY
LITERATURE
LANGUAGES
ETHICS
PHILOSOPHY
ARTS APPRECIATION

Outline

- Overview of HumanitiesDC, the humanities, oral history, and the DC Oral History Collaborative
- Overview of Oral History Interviewing 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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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; ~10 grants awarded in each category



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](#)

What is Oral History?



“The value of oral history lies largely in the way it helps to place people’s experiences within a larger social and historical context. The interview becomes a record useful for documenting past events, individual or collective experiences, and understandings of the ways that history is constructed. Because it relies on memory, oral history captures recollections about the past filtered through the lens of a changing personal and social context.” - Oral History Association (2018)

- **In taking a life history approach, the oral historian seeks to document the narrator’s journey through life, from early childhood through the present moment. The goal is to probe the ways in which the narrator’s life story resounds with overtones and undertones of broader historical significance.**
- Related to journalistic-style interviewing, storytelling, and sociological/anthropological research, but distinct in its depth, breadth, and approaches to subjectivity and informed consent.
- Oral histories are tools within the humanities. You can interview people about non-humanities topics too!



DC Oral History Collaborative Grants

The DC Oral History Collaborative (DCOHC) is a partnership between HumanitiesDC and the DC Public Library. It was created in 2017 as a city-wide initiative aimed at documenting and preserving the history of Washington's residents and communities through oral history via grantmaking, training, and public projects. HumanitiesDC DCOHC grantees are considered members of the Collaborative!

3 DCOHC grant opportunities:

- Oral History Interviewing (Cycle I)
- Beyond the Archives (Cycle II)
- Continuing Oral History Projects (Cycle II)

Oral History Interviewing Grant

- Eligibility: DC-based individuals, community groups, nonprofit organizations
- Maximum Award: \$8,000 (plus an additional \$5,000 may be requested to translate transcripts)
- Project Period: May 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027
- Projects that explore DC life, history, and culture through interviews with the people who have lived it. Funds are only to collect and archive interviews.
- Grantees must attend a three-session, in-person oral history training workshop and will work with staff and consultants throughout the course of their projects
- Final deliverables required: media files, transcripts, indexes, release forms, and metadata for each interview. These are ultimately housed in the [People's Archive at the DC Public Library](#) (DCPL).
- [Link to RFP](#), [link to workshop recording/slides](#)
- In 2026 we received 51 eligible OHI applications and will fund ~10



Fiscal Sponsorship

- Individuals may choose to apply through a fiscal sponsor, but fiscal sponsors are not required for this grant. Fiscal sponsors must meet same eligibility requirements.
- 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

Grant Review Process

1. **Read list of assigned applications to see any conflicts of interest**
2. **Submit onboarding form**
3. **Read through each application**
4. **Write out quantitative scores and qualitative comments**
5. **Finish all evaluations by March 20 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

**Friday, March 20
at 12pm (noon)**



Weighted Review Criteria

Project Description - 35%

The interest area is focused and specific about what the applicant hopes to learn from narrators' memories and reflections on the past. The applicant also demonstrates why oral history is the ideal tool for the exploration of this topic.

Contribution to DC History - 25%

The applicant demonstrates the importance of capturing these preserved stories for future researchers, residents, and the general public. The research topic might be hyperlocal or small in scope, but the interviews provide important human context to the history of DC and its residents.

Weighted Review Criteria, Con't

Community Collaboration - 30%

The applicant demonstrates how the project would be strengthened through collaboration and community involvement. A recruitment plan for finding narrators is explained. If they are not already connected, the applicant describes why they chose to interview members of this particular community and how they will build these connections.

Capacity and Personnel - 10%

The Project Director demonstrates their motivation to carry the project to completion. This may be displayed through past experiences, connection to the community of inquiry, any research already completed, or other demonstrated passion for the topic area. If other team members and collaborators are identified, their involvement is clearly explained. An individual's role in different aspects of the project's planning, development, and/or implementation is explained.

Scores

- Scores are from 0 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


Scoring Guide

- 10: Applicant fully responded to all questions in detail, and/or their response meets or exceeds all of the stated review criteria.
- 7-9: Applicant responded to most questions, and/or their response meets most of the stated review criteria. Responses lack some details.
- 4-6: Applicant responded to some questions, and/or their response meets some of the stated review criteria. Responses lack key details.
- 1-3: Applicant responded to few questions, and/or their response meets few of the stated review criteria. Responses lack most details.
- 0: Applicant didn't respond to any questions, and/or their response doesn't meet any of the stated review criteria. Responses are not detailed at all.

Comments

Comments:


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

Measuring Success* 



The goals or impacts of the project are achievable and clear. The applicant has a clear plan for assessing the project's success.

clear plan

9,990 characters left of 10,000

Measuring Success Score* 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Measuring Success*  



The goals or impacts of the project are achievable and clear. The applicant has a clear plan for assessing the project's success.

• While the outcomes are not fully measurable, the applicant has set targeted attendance goals with thorough plans to monitor foot traffic and website traffic.

• Since there are also plans to survey attendees, the description would benefit from details on how the surveys will be physically collected and evaluated.

• Since this is a 4-part series, the plans to assess the event's success would be strengthened with evaluations following each event to inform the success at the following.

9,508 characters left of 10,000

Measuring Success Score*  

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Example of a strong comment & score

Example of a comment that does **not** match the score

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• Don't reflect scores

Effective Comments

Project Director seems to have some directly relevant experience, but additional details on background would strengthen application. Specifically, how did applicant become involved with street vendor community? What work has applicant done to decriminalize street vending? Is applicant a community organizer, a civically engaged neighbor, a lawyer, a volunteer with a nonprofit? What role does applicant have in the work that they describe?

Team members are identified by first name only. What is the "extensive and ongoing experience" that [x and y] have with street vendors? Same questions as above. Not looking for a formal role or professional experience, just want to understand the work that each did.

Good details about [z]'s background and directly relevant experience.

It would help to have more details on what about African American heritage and lineage within DC they will cover. What experiences, traditions, and cultural practices are they referring to? As written, the project scope is broad. Is there a specific generation, time frame, nationality/lineage, or other factor(s) they plan to focus on? What part of their families' histories will they explore?

I would like to see more specificity on who they'd like to narrate and what topics they plan to cover. I would recommend the applicant clarify the scope of their work by specifying an issue, time frame, location, intersectional identity, etc. so the reviewer can understand their contribution. If the applicant would like to maintain a broader, then they should consider reframing their application to clarify the value and rationale for this.

The applicant demonstrates a strong personal and professional connection to D.C.'s Pan-African community, ensuring authentic engagement and participation. The recruitment plan leverages existing networks, which is a practical approach.

Poor Comments

Interesting to focus on recent history

Maybe. Description is lacks clear focus.

Not much of a plan and no clear solid connections

[copies entire applicant response into comment]
Unclear.

Healthy Living Practices for children, parents, community.

Time for the evaluation questions!

Link: [How to access/review evaluations in grants portal](#)
(listed as Instructions for Completing Intake Form on website)

Introduction, Instructions, Reviewer Panel

Scoring Guide:

- 10: Applicant fully responded to all questions in detail, and/or their response meets or exceeds all of the stated review criteria.
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- 0: Applicant didn't respond to any questions, and/or their response doesn't meet any of the stated review criteria. Responses are not detailed at all.

Remember to note your reviewer panel on each evaluation!

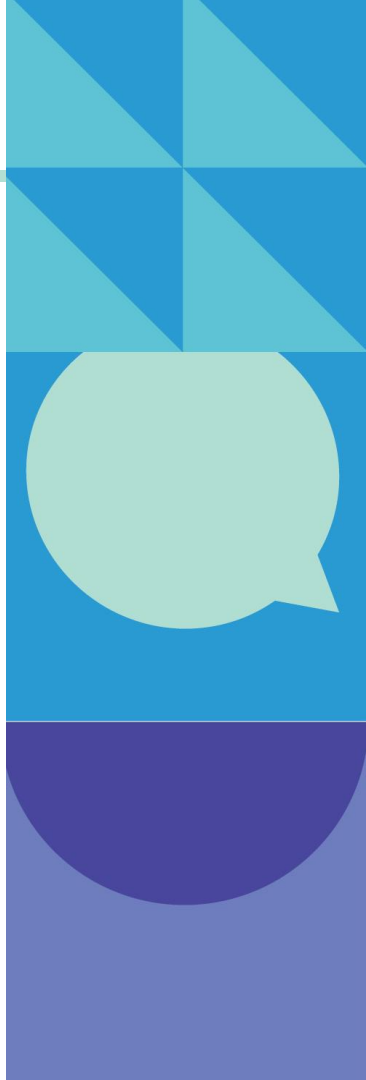
Evaluations should be primarily based on applicant's responses to the listed questions at the top of each weighted section, but also review the rest of the application for more context.

Interest Area

- Is the interest area clear? Specific? Compelling?
- If you have experience with DigDC: is a very similar project already archived there?
- Does it make sense as to why this project should be explored through oral history rather than another medium?

Example #1 Interest Area

Christ House: This oral history project will explore the profound impact of Christ House over the past 40 years through the lived experiences of those who built, sustained, and were transformed by its work. At its core, this project is an opportunity to document the origins of Christ House, the evolution of medical respite care, and the personal stories of healing and hope that have defined its mission. A key area of focus will be capturing the voices of Christ House's **founders**—individuals now in their senior years who had the vision and determination to create the first medical respite facility in the country. Their firsthand accounts will offer invaluable insight into the challenges they faced, the decisions they made, and the unwavering commitment that shaped a model of care now replicated nationwide. Documenting their experiences is a time-sensitive endeavor; by preserving their stories now, we ensure that future generations can learn from and build upon their legacy. **Beyond the founders, we will also explore the experiences of former patients, staff, volunteers, and community partners. Their perspectives will illustrate how Christ House not only provided medical care but also restored dignity, inspired service, and influenced broader efforts to make healthcare more equitable.** These stories will shed light on the realities of homelessness and healing in Washington, DC, bringing attention to systemic challenges while celebrating the resilience of individuals and communities. Oral history is the ideal tool for this inquiry because it captures the depth and nuance of lived experience in a way that traditional historical records cannot. **Unlike written reports or statistical analyses, oral history provides space for individuals to share their journeys in their own words, preserving emotion, perspective, and personal insight. This method is particularly important for marginalized voices—such as those who have experienced homelessness—ensuring that their stories are affirmed and dignified rather than reduced to impersonal data points. [...]**



Example #2 Interest Area

Kai Walther: In this oral history project, I will explore how and why gay men took part in the “unsanctioned” activity of cruising, with its potential for dangerous or violent encounters, legal consequences, and spread of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), as well as possible intimate relationships, social encounters, and sexual freedom. I will additionally examine the ramifications of cruising on DC’s nascent gay communities and culture. My inquiry will focus on the years between 1970 and 2000. The time period for my research begins in the 1970s during the rise of the gay liberation movement, which included increased direct action activism, emergence of gay pride, and the American Psychiatric Association’s removal of homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses. The 1980s, conversely, were most notable as the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and, compared to the previous decade, increased conservatism and anti-gay discrimination. Anti-gay abuse and institutional discrimination continued into the 1990s (Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell; Defense of Marriage Act), as did the impact of HIV/AIDS. However, gay rights movements, pride parades, and “gayborhoods” such as the one in Dupont Circle also gained traction throughout the decade. Cruising largely originated as a way for gay men to meet each other clandestinely, as they did not have access to the same structures, institutions, and general societal acceptance for sexual and romantic encounters as did their heterosexual peers. **Gay men in the US have been cruising long before 1970, but I am particularly interested in cruising during this period of heightened visibility, tragedies, and progress for gay people.** Oral history is the ideal tool for this inquiry not least because very few archival materials even address gay cruising. Historically, records of LGBTQ life were rarely preserved, and if they were preserved, often destroyed, due to legal and societal restrictions on homosexuality. Information on gay cruising faced additional barriers to preservation due to the taboo around sex, not to mention gay sex. Oral histories about cruising help fill this gap in the archive. **They also diversify the historical sources base by including perspectives of those whom the established LGBT organizations, movements, and narratives did or could not represent.** Furthermore, oral histories rely on the perspectives and experiences of people who actually lived through the particular moment or movement about which they are speaking. **For a topic as potentially sensitive or controversial as cruising, it is important to hear from the people who actually engage(d) in the practice. They are the experts, and it is only through recording their stories, the way they want to tell them, that this history will be documented.**

Contribution to DC History

- Is the project connected to DC?
- Do you think people would be interested in hearing/reading these interviews? Or, could they contribute to future research? Why or how?
- The research topic might be hyperlocal or small in scope, but the interviews should still tell stories about life in DC
Ex) interviewing people from a single apartment building, or who were part of the dance scene at a specific club

Community Involvement and Recruitment

- Will the narrators and their communities be active participants in the project, or will they only tell their stories?
 - Ex) connections to other narrators, suggestions for interview locations
- Does the recruitment strategy make sense? Is the applicant thoughtful about how they'll find narrators? Is this community relevant to the area of interest/research topic?
 - Individuals don't have to be named yet!

Community Connection

- How are key personnel connected to the narrators/community?
 - Ex) same demographics, active in same hobby/community, live in same neighborhood, etc.
- If they're not directly connected: will the applicant be able to forge connections to the narrators' community? Is their plan feasible?

Translation Enhancement

- Additional funding specifically to translate transcripts into different languages
- Not applicable to every application, not included in weighted criteria. Applicants will expand more on their request if they are conducting interviews English and want to translate transcripts into non-English.
- If translation enhancement requested, check of "yes" and evaluation question will appear. Score vs. N/A
- Did the applicant explain why translating the transcripts will make the project more accessible?
 - Ex) interviews about life in a particular neighborhood where many languages are spoken

Capacity and Personnel

- Remember that applicants/personnel may not have experience conducting oral histories!
- Project director in charge of overall project, shapes goals and activities. Might be hands-on and/or delegates to others.
 - This may be related to prior work that is relevant to this project, connections to the topic area/community, completed research, and/or passion for interest area. Applicant should be clear about WHY they want to do this project.
- Team and collaborators work with project director on overall project or specific tasks. Not required!
 - Ex) assistant, researcher, second interviewer

Does it make sense why these people are working on the project? Are their roles explained?

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

Number of Hours

- Last section of evaluation
- Use whole numbers and/or decimal points
Ex) 1.5 hours, 0.75 hours, etc.
- Helps HumanitiesDC track reviewer hours for our own records and funding requests. May also help you track your own volunteer hours.

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 individual applicants
- Fiscal sponsor letter of confirmation
- Total estimated interviews
- Timeline
- Familiarity with oral history interviewing
- Budget
- Community share back session
- *ADA Compliance* section

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, 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.
- Funding decisions are sent out approximately ten weeks after application deadline, and full list of grantees sent to reviewers
- Grantees receive funds approximately two weeks after notification
- **\$125 honorarium per grants cycle to reviewers who submit all evaluations before the deadline (March 20 at noon) AND attend the panel meeting. More information to come.**





HumanitiesDC

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