

Mississippi Humanities Council Grant Application Guidelines

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If you have trouble accessing this application online, please contact the Mississippi Humanities Council, 601.432.6752 or carol@mhc.state.ms.us

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1. About the Mississippi Humanities Council

The Mississippi Humanities Council is an independent nonprofit organization affiliated with the National Endowment for the Humanities. Established in 1972 on the premise that the humanities are relevant to any enterprise involving serious thought, discussion and decision-making, the Council has worked to foster the public's understanding of historical, literary and philosophical perspectives on the human experience. The Council is committed to making its programs accessible to as many Mississippians as possible and expects grant recipients to do the same.

WHAT ARE THE HUMANITIES?

The humanities enrich our understanding of the human experience in the past, present and future. The humanities disciplines, as defined by Congress, include:

- literature, classics, languages and linguistics
- history and archaeology
- philosophy, jurisprudence, ethics and comparative religion
- history, criticism and theory of the arts
- social sciences employing historical or philosophical approaches

Through language, literature and the arts, human beings express their knowledge about their cultural heritage and reflect on its meaning. The contributions of scholars, writers and researchers in such fields as philosophy, ethics and jurisprudence enrich the civic

dialogue in a democratic society. Insights about the past from archaeology and history enable us to interpret the present and plan for a better future.

2. Grants We Offer

The MHC grants program seek to fund projects that stimulate meaningful community dialogue, attract diverse audiences, are participatory and engaging and apply the humanities to our everyday lives. Grants may be used to support public humanities programs, exhibits, the planning of larger projects, and the development of original productions in film, television, radio or online resources.

MINIGRANTS

Grants of \$2,000 or less are considered minigrants. There are no deadlines for minigrants, though applications must be received at least eight weeks before the program or proposed grant period begins.

REGULAR GRANTS

Grants greater than \$2,000 are considered regular grants. Regular grants may be used to support larger public humanities programs, conferences, exhibits and the development of original productions in film, television, radio or online resources

Deadlines for applying for regular grants are May 1 and September 15. Proposals must be delivered to the MHC office by 5:00 p.m. on these dates. Programs and expenditures may not occur fewer than ten weeks after the deadline date you selected.

Early submissions are not processed until the official deadline for that funding cycle. For example, if you submit an application on January 1 and the next grant deadline in your category is April 15, MHC will not process your application until April 15.

RACIAL EQUITY GRANTS

With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the MHC offers a special grant program to support projects that explore the racial and ethnic history of Mississippi and foster dialogue about the continuing legacy of racism. Racial Equity grants have the same criteria, application forms, and deadlines as our regular grants and minigrants. Consult with MHC staff to see if your project qualifies for this grant program.

ORAL HISTORY GRANTS

With funding from the Mississippi Legislature through an appropriation to the Department of Archives and History, the Mississippi Oral History Project has captured the stories of our state since 1999. Groups may apply for grants to support oral history projects that relate to the experiences of Mississippians. Unless you have written

permission from the MHC's executive director, all grantees must agree to work with the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage at the University of Southern Mississippi, which will archive the interviews. Applicants must contact Dr. Kevin Greene (kevin.greene@usm.edu); (601) 266-6270) co-director of the Center for Oral History, to discuss projects before they submitting an application. Oral history grant applicants are strongly encouraged to develop a plan to use, disseminate or exhibit the interviews once they are completed. Grantees working with the Center for Oral History must include a \$1,000 consultation and archiving fee for the Center in the proposed budgets for regular grants, and a \$500 fee for minigrants.

Grant limits and deadlines are the same as for minigrants and regular grants. Thus, Oral History Grants of \$2,000 or less may be submitted anytime, but at least eight weeks before the project begins; deadlines for Oral History Grants between \$2001 and \$7500 are May 1 and September 15.

FUNDING CRITERIA

Funding by MHC in any given round depends on the quality of proposals, on the funds available, and on the number of proposals received. MHC attempts to allocate funds equitably across the state Congressional districts to serve as many Mississippians as possible.

3. Are You Eligible for a Grant?

MHC grants are intended to support projects that use humanities disciplines to increase understanding of the human experience. Project activities are primarily intended to serve Mississippians and must be free and open to the public. Organizations or groups that apply for grants from MHC must be constituted for nonprofit purposes. It is not necessary that such organizations or groups be incorporated or have tax-exempt status. MHC does not award grants to for-profit entities. All grant applicants must have a [DUNS number](#). Typical organizations eligible for grants include:

- Private nonprofit organizations
- Institutions of higher education
- State, local and federally recognized Indian tribal governments
- Community and cultural organizations
- Educational and professional groups
- Museums
- Libraries
- Public agencies
- Non-commercial radio and television stations

MHC will not support the following:

- programs that have an admission fee or registration charge

- projects primarily intended to promote an organization or its programs
- salaries of employees associated with the applying organization or other overhead costs
- construction, preservation or renovation of facilities or purchase of equipment
- acquisitions or additions to collections
- alcoholic beverages
- entertainment
- food costs for audiences
- courses for academic credit
- fellowships, scholarships and prizes
- travel to professional meetings
- individual research projects unless they are directly supporting a public humanities program
- publications, or performances or presentations of works of art, unless they are essential in conveying the humanities content of the project to a non-academic audience
- projects that advocate or promote a particular political, ideological, religious or partisan point of view

Individuals and for-profit groups are not eligible to apply for MHC grants. While nonprofit organizations may collaborate informally to share grant funds, the name of only one organization may appear on the application. A staff member from that organization will be the lead organizer or project director.

It is essential that the applicant organization and humanities scholars collaborate in preparing the grant application. Please state on your application whether your proposed speakers have accepted your invitation to participate on the scheduled dates. Participating scholars should understand that their audience will consist of the general public, not just other scholars.

4. How to Apply

Step One: Discuss your project with MHC staff.

To make the best use of your time, MHC will help you determine whether your project is eligible for our grant program before you apply. Via email or phone, applicants must contact the Executive Director or the Assistant Director a minimum of four weeks before the grant deadline you select to discuss your project. Staff will give you guidance on how to craft a successful application and answer any questions you have. Oral History Grant applicants must also contact Dr. Kevin Greene at the Center for Oral History at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Step Two: Submit a rough draft of your grant application

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a draft of their grant application, including proposed budget, at least two weeks prior to the deadline. MHC staff will offer constructive feedback and suggestions on how to strengthen the application. Grant application drafts should be sent via email to carol@mhc.state.ms.us.

Step Three: Submit your written application.

We prefer that you submit your grant application in PDF format by email to carol@mhc.state.ms.us. If this is not possible for you, you may print the application and mail the completed forms to our office by the deadline. All applications must be processed by the deadline to be considered. PLEASE NOTE: You will receive an email receipt from the Mississippi Humanities Council when your application has been processed. If you do not receive an email receipt within seven (7) days of your submission, please phone the Council at 601-432-6752.

Application forms are available for download [here](#):

All applications must include a project narrative that includes the following information:

- A description of the program and its goals, as well as plans for publicity and evaluation
- Applicant's previous experience with similar programs and with MHC
- An explanation of how the proposed project will benefit the applicant's organization and/or the community
- Outline of the format and schedule of events for each program in the project, including the names of scholars involved, their topics, and the date and location of any public programs.
- For oral history grants, an explanation of how the interviews will be used.
- For racial equity grants, explain how your project addresses issues related to the legacy of racism in Mississippi.

Applications must also include a completed and signed grant application checklist; MHC resume sheets for each program participant paid with grant funds; and a detailed budget narrative explaining how grants funds will be spent.

Step Four: What happens next?

You will receive notification by email of funding decisions within four weeks of your submission of a minigrant, and within ten weeks of the application deadline for a regular grant. Please note we do not process early submissions until the official deadline for that funding cycle.

If MHC funds your grant request, you will receive an award letter and a packet detailing your next steps. If MHC does not fund your request, you will receive a letter explaining our decision.

5. Keys to a Successful Proposal

Humanities scholars actively involved

Humanities scholars should participate in all phases of the planning, conduct and evaluation of project activities. Create ways for them to contribute their analytical and teaching skills to encourage the public to engage in critical thinking and interpretation.

Potential audience members are involved in the planning

People who represent the potential audience should participate in designing the grant project, through planning, execution of the project and follow-up evaluation. Projects that cover topics related to specific groups—such as ethnic minorities, senior citizens or women—should specifically include representatives from those groups on the project committee.

Grant projects should be accessible to all segments of the population and no one should be excluded because of race, sex, age or disability. For instance, the location selected for a program should be accessible to all persons who might wish to attend. Grant recipients/project directors are expected to make all reasonable efforts to make programs accessible to citizens with disabilities. If you have questions regarding accessibility, please contact the Mississippi Humanities Council.

Program reflects balance of views

Proposals that address public policy questions and controversial issues should provide a balance of viewpoints, avoiding advocacy or bias. Humanities scholars with expertise in a range of viewpoints should be involved in the planning and implementation phases of program development.

Have an adequate evaluation plan

Evaluation of the success of a project is an essential part of good programming. Understanding the response of a program's audience is crucial to planning future programs. Grant applicants must describe their evaluation plan in their project narrative. Evaluation forms distributed to audience members should solicit demographic information in addition to qualitative responses to the program. Awarded grantees will receive a sample audience evaluation form that may be adapted to your particular program. The project director's final grant report must contain an assessment of the success of the program based on audience evaluation.

Have a strong publicity plan

Publicity is a critical part of every successful project. An appropriate and effective plan for promoting the program must be described in the grant narrative. The first step in successfully publicizing a program is carefully defining its purpose and intended

audience. Submit your application well in advance of your program date to allow adequate time for publicity.

Attractive, striking and informative publicity well in advance of your programs will encourage people to attend. We strongly encourage you to send press releases, announcements and invitations to newspapers and radio and television stations, as well as using various forms of social media to publicize the event. In addition, we encourage you to send promotional materials about the program to Mississippi's Congressional delegation and local legislators. We encourage you to cooperate with other local groups and organizations to help publicize your program or project.

Please note that all print and other publicity materials must acknowledge MHC support and include the MHC logo, available for download [here](#).

6. Budget Tips and Terms

Your budget should be an accurate and complete estimate of the financial resources needed to carry out your proposed project. You may identify three sources of support:

- Mississippi Humanities Council grant funds
- Cost-sharing provided by the sponsoring organization (in cash or in kind)
- Cash contributions from third parties

The total budget is the sum of all the resources available from these three categories. The application form provides space to summarize both income and expenditures for the project. Supplement this summary with a budget narrative showing that your costs are reasonable and directly related to the project activities you propose.

Expenditures

The budgeted expenditures for the project must be made between the beginning and ending dates of the proposed project period. When projects require more than the requested amount from MHC, explain how you will find additional funds to complete the project. (See explanation under Cost-Sharing.)

Fiscal Agent

The applicant shall designate a fiscal agent, who will assume responsibility for authorizing expenses and making disbursements of funds according to the provisions of the approved budget for the project. **The project director may not act as financial officer.**

The fiscal agent must agree to follow the fiscal policies of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Mississippi Humanities Council. He or she will agree to maintain financial records and make them available for audit for up to three years from the end of the project date. When the applicant institution is a college or university, the fiscal agent

must be selected by the school's accounting office or other office responsible for grants management.

Personnel

Most applicants accumulate cost-sharing through the contributed time of project staff, especially the project director and volunteers. Scholars and other project participants are paid honoraria; however, large honoraria for speakers, panelists and consultants are discouraged. Applicants can consult MHC staff to discuss reasonable honoraria. The Council will not pay honoraria for employees of the applicants' organization.

Travel

Travel plans should be itemized by number of trips, points of origin and destination, means of transportation and length of stay. Mileage expenses for privately owned automobiles will be reimbursed at the prevailing government rate of the state of Mississippi or the actual cost of domestic coach class airfare, train, bus or other public transportation with receipts. Actual cost of meals and lodging can be reimbursed with receipts.

7. Cost Share

Each organization applying for a grant must provide for the project's cost-sharing contributions in cash and/or in kind. The combined total of cash and in-kind contributions must at least equal the amount of MHC funds. Applicants are encouraged to be comprehensive in their in-kind calculations, which may exceed the amount of grant funds requested.

NOTE: Many organizations meet the cost-sharing requirement through donated goods and services, such as the estimated value of volunteers' time, meeting space provided free of charge or donated materials. Most applicants accumulate cost-sharing through the contributed time of project staff, especially the project director and volunteers. MHC staff is available to help you determine your cost-sharing contributions.

MHC recognizes that all cost-sharing or matching funds may not be in hand at the time of application. However, you must describe how you expect to meet the matching requirements.

The Mississippi Humanities Council requires that all grants over \$2,000 (aside from racial equity grants) must be matched in part by cash. For grants greater than \$2,000, a cash match of 10% is required. Racial equity grants do not require a cash match, but can be matched by all in-kind contributions.

8. Definition of Terms

Authorizing Official

A person with authority to legally obligate an organization to the grant agreement.

Cost Share

The value of the cash or in-kind contribution to the project by the grantee or parties other than the Mississippi Humanities Council.

DUNS Number

A unique nine-digit identification number for each physical location of a business. D-U-N-S Number assignment is free for all businesses required to register with the federal government for contracts or grants. The DUNS system enables the government to better track the spending of federal funds.

Fiscal Agent

Person who will manage fiscal matters related to the grant.

Grant Period

The period in which the granted project takes place. Grant applicants determine the length of the grant period, which should include sufficient time after the project to complete and submit all final reports. Grant periods should not begin less than eight weeks after minigrant deadlines and ten weeks after major grant deadlines. **No grant funds may be spent or obligated before the start of the grant period.**

Honoraria

The stipends or fees paid to project participants for their professional services.

Humanities Disciplines

See “What are the Humanities?”

Humanities Scholar

Humanities scholars include the following:

- Any person teaching in a humanities discipline at an accredited institution of higher learning in this state or who is retired or on leave from such a position.
- A person professionally educated in a traditional liberal arts field, holding the M.A. or Ph.D. degree in such a field, who has taught, written or done research in that field.

In some cases, individuals will be considered humanities scholars by virtue of special experiences, expertise, or achievements, such as publications, in one of the fields of the humanities. Please consult with MHC regarding special cases.

In-Kind Contributions

Services, facilities, publicity, volunteer time or other non-cash contributions in support of a project. Estimate the dollar value of in-kind contributions based on what these services would normally cost.

Project Director

The individual responsible for managing all aspects of a project, including its planning, promotion, conduct and evaluation.

If you have any questions, please contact MHC for assistance at (601) 432-6752.

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Email: carol@mhc.state.ms.us – MHC Homepage: <http://www.mshumanities.org>