

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 grants@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 humanities experts, 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 seeks 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, podcasts, or online resources.

MINIGRANTS

Grants of \$2,500 or less are considered minigrants. There are no deadlines for minigrants, though applications must be received at least four weeks via our [online portal](#) before the program or proposed grant period begins.

~~REGULAR GRANTS~~ **SUSPENDED**

Because the National Endowment for the Humanities has decided to release less than 50% of the funds Congress appropriated for state humanities councils for 2026, amounting to an over \$550,000 cut for Mississippi alone, MHC has made the difficult but necessary decision to suspend our Regular Grants.

~~Grants greater than \$2,500 are considered regular grants and are capped at \$10,000. Regular grants may be used to support larger public humanities programs, conferences, exhibits and the development of original productions in film, television, radio, podcasts, or online resources.~~

~~Deadlines for applying for regular grants are May 1 and September 15. Proposals must be completed via our [online portal](#) by midnight to grants@mhc.state.ms.us on these dates. Programs and expenditures may not occur fewer than eight 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 May 1, MHC will not process your application until May 1.~~

MISSISSIPPI STORIES GRANTS

The Mississippi Stories Grant program, supported by the Mississippi Legislature and the Mississippi Department of Archives & History, is designed to help Mississippians share the stories that matter most to them and their communities. The Mississippi Stories program is rooted in the idea that some of our most meaningful history is found in the voices and lived experiences of everyday people.

This new grant program will support community projects to collect and share first-hand accounts of the lives, histories, and experiences of Mississippians. While such projects may include traditional oral history initiatives that will be professionally archived, these grants will also support Mississippi story-based projects that result in museum exhibits, online exhibits, podcasts, documentary films, or other media. While interviews remain central, the Mississippi Stories Grant encourages creative ways to bring these stories to life and make them accessible to the public.

By “Mississippi stories,” we mean personal narratives grounded in first-hand testimony and individual perspective, rather than interpretations or retellings of someone else’s experiences or history. Examples of fundable projects might include:

- An interactive [digital kiosk and audio-equipped display](#) that allows museum visitors to listen to people's voices alongside photographs, letters, and historical artifacts.
- A project like [Academy Stories](#), a web-based initiative which gathers and shares personal narratives discussing a significant event or period in Mississippi history.
- Documentary films that can weave first-person oral history recordings into the narrative as on-camera interviews or voiceover, using the speaker’s own words, emotions, and memories to frame historical events, provide context, and ground the film’s interpretation of the past in lived experience.
- History exhibits, such as those at the [Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum in Cleveland](#), which enhance visitors’ experience by incorporating first-person interviews into the exhibit text or audio/visual displays.
- Oral history interviews on a particular topic or community that will be archived and made accessible.

All stories and materials produced through these grants, whether presented in physical or digital form, must be made accessible to the public at no cost.

State-funded grants of up to \$5,000 will be awarded three times a year, with deadlines on September 15, January 15, and May 1. For 2026 and 2027, no matching funds are required. Projects will be reviewed by a grant committee, with final recommendations approved by the Mississippi Humanities Council board. All Mississippi Stories grant applications must be submitted through our [online portal](#).

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. As per federal rules, grant applicants must obtain a free Unique Entity ID (UEI) as the primary means of identification required to receive federal funding. Organizations seeking MHC funds are REQUIRED to provide the Unique Entity ID (UEI) for grant applications. 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 construction, preservation or renovation of facilities or purchase of equipment over \$10,000
- acquisitions or additions to collections
- alcoholic beverages
- food costs for audiences unless food is central to the program
- 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
- No MHC grants funds may be used for political lobbying activities
- As required by the Trump Administration's Executive Orders, MHC awards using federal funds may not be used for the following purposes:

- promotion of gender ideology;
- promotion of discriminatory equity ideology;
- support for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) or diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives or activities; or
- environmental justice initiatives or activities

Contact the MHC staff if you have any questions about these requirements.

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. All applying organizations must have a UEI. Contact the MHC if you have questions about this requirement.

It is essential that the applicant organization and humanities experts 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 humanities experts should understand that their audience will consist of the general public, not just other humanities experts.

4. How to Apply

Step One: If possible, attend a Mississippi Stories Grant webinar.

The Mississippi Humanities Council will offer free webinars throughout the year to help community organizations, educators, museum staff, librarians, filmmakers, and local storytellers design clear, story-based projects, build realistic budgets, and draft fundable proposals with strong public impact. These sessions will guide applicants step by step from project concept through budget and proposal outline, so they leave with a concrete understanding of how to create and submission an application to the Mississippi Stories Grant program.

Step Two: 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 applying to discuss your project. Staff will give you guidance on how to craft a successful application and answer any questions you have.

Step Three: 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 submitting an application. MHC staff will offer constructive feedback and suggestions on how to strengthen the application. To submit a draft, click the “save and resume” button at the bottom of the page in the online grant portal. You will then be sent a link to the application via email. Forward that link to grants@mhc.state.ms.us. MHC staff will then be able to review your draft application.

Step Four: Submit your written application.

All grant applications should be submitted via our [online portal](#). If this is not possible for you, contact MHC staff. All applications must be received by the deadline to be considered.

All applications must include a Description of Proposed Project 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 humanities experts involved, their topics, and the date and location of any public programs.
- For Mississippi Stories grants, an explanation of how the interviews will be used and how they will be accessible to the public.

Applications also include a grant application checklist; detailed information for each program participant paid with grant funds; and a detailed budget narrative section explaining how grant funds will be spent.

Step Five: What happens next?

You will receive notification by email of funding decisions within four weeks of your submission of an application.

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

5. Keys to a Successful Proposal

Humanities experts actively involved

Humanities experts should participate in all phases of the planning, conducting 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 experts 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 conduct 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 as well as a space to detail projected costs.

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 agent.**

The fiscal agent must agree to follow the fiscal policies of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Mississippi Humanities Council. They 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.

Indirect Costs

Per federal rule 2 CFR §200.414 (f), the Mississippi Humanities Council will honor any published federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) for grants made with federal funds. Any nonfederal entity that has never received a federal NICRA may charge a de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct costs. For grants made with state funds, including Mississippi Stories grants, indirect costs may not be charged.

Personnel

Most applicants accumulate cost-sharing through the contributed time of project staff, especially the project director and volunteers. Humanities experts and other project participants are paid honoraria; however, large honoraria for speakers, panelists, and consultants are discouraged. If a humanities expert's honorarium exceeds \$1,000, we will expect the applicant to share the cost and not seek the full amount from the MHC, or to offer an equal amount of cash match in the overall project budget. Applicants may consult MHC staff to discuss reasonable honoraria. The Council will not pay honoraria for employees of the applicants' organization.

Facilities

An MHC grant cannot pay the applicant institution to rent its own meeting spaces or equipment. The cost or value of such rental may be counted toward the cost-share.

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

***Note: Cost Share is not required for Mississippi Stories grants in 2026 and 2027.**

Each organization applying for other MHC grants 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 are 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 \$2,500 must be matched in part by cash. **For grants greater than \$2,500, a cash match of 10% is required.***

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.

UEI Number

Organizations seeking MHC funds are REQUIRED to provide the Unique Entity ID (UEI). Organizations can receive their free UEI on the SAM.gov website. Note: A UEI number is not required for Mississippi Stories grants.

EIN Number

The Employer Identification Number (EIN), also known as the Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) or the Federal Tax Identification Number, is a unique nine-digit number assigned by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to business entities operating in the United States for the purposes of identification. Organizations without paid employees often don't have an EIN number. Grantees are not required to have an EIN number.

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 may not begin less than four weeks after an application is submitted. **No grant funds may be spent or obligated before the start of the grant period or after the grant period ends.**

Honoraria

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

Humanities Disciplines

See “What are the Humanities?”

Humanities Scholar/Expert

Humanities experts and experts 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 experts by virtue of life 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: grants@mhc.state.ms.us – MHC Homepage: <http://www.mshumanities.org>