



NORTH CAROLINA  
HUMANITIES  
COUNCIL

MANY STORIES, ONE PEOPLE

# Grant Guidelines

Community Research Grant  
Community Engagement Grants  
Large Grants

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## **Introduction**

### **Mission Statement**

The North Carolina Humanities Council serves as an advocate for lifelong learning and thoughtful dialogue about all facets of human life. We facilitate the exploration and celebration of the many voices and stories of North Carolina's cultures and heritage.

### **Background**

The North Carolina Humanities Council develops among North Carolinians an understanding of and appreciation for the humanities that can transform the way they see themselves and their communities. In support of these goals, the Council is committed to the following:

- An interdisciplinary approach to the humanities
- Dialogue
- Discovery and understanding of the humanities--culture, identity, and history
- Respect for individual community members and community values
- Humanities scholarship and scholars to develop humanities perspectives
- Cultural diversity and inclusiveness
- Informed and active citizenship as an outgrowth of new awareness of self and community

The Council's grant-making programs are a direct extension of our organizational mission and we seek proposals which:

- Connect the public to quality humanities scholarship through programs that respond to community interest, encourage dialogue, and stimulate audiences to think critically about a broad range of humanities topics.
- Engage diverse audiences in the exploration of their personal and collective stories, asking fundamental questions about identity, work and culture.
- Foster more informed and engaged citizens by using humanities-based cultural, historic and analytic frameworks to support critical thinking.
- Forge partnerships with other institutions such as local cultural organizations, broadcast media stations, cultural heritage centers, universities and community colleges, veterans' centers, and libraries.
- Engage either deep, community-focused subjects that address topics that are relevant to the community and draw connections to broad themes or historical trends.
- Encourage long-term collaborations and partnerships at the local, state and/or national level.
- Include complementary components that deepen an audience's understanding of a subject. For example, a museum exhibition might be accompanied by a website, mobile app, or discussion programs.
- Engage adults and life-long learning.

## Types of Council Grants

### **Community Research Grant .....up to \$2,000**

**Community Research Grants provide up to \$2,000 to support the incubation, development, or planning of a public humanities project.** Allowable expenses include honoraria or travel/meals/lodging for humanists consulting on the project, to support planning meetings, or for research activities of a limited scope which are connected to a forthcoming public humanities project.

Submission Timeline: To be eligible for funding consideration, applicants may only submit proposals for projects which begin **AT LEAST than eight weeks after the submission deadline** (see [www.nchumanities.org](http://www.nchumanities.org) for submission deadlines). Grant awards are typically announced one month after the submission deadline.

### **Community Engagement Grant..... up to \$3,500**

**Community Engagement Grants provide up to \$3,500 to support the implementation of public humanities projects.** Typical expenses include scholar stipends, scholar travel/meals/lodging, publicity, exhibit fabrication, and certain other expenses connected with a project of limited scope. Project formats can include, but are not limited to, lecture/discussion series, exhibitions, presentations and workshops. The Council encourages programs which serve educators, veterans, and underserved communities in North Carolina.

Submission Timeline: To be eligible for funding consideration, applicants can only submit proposals for projects which begin **AT LEAST than eight weeks after the submission deadline** (see [www.nchumanities.org](http://www.nchumanities.org) for submission deadlines). Grant awards are typically announced one month after the submission deadline.

### **Large Grant ..... up to \$20,000**

**Large Grants provide up to \$20,000 to support public humanities projects of a wide or extended scope.** Typical expenses include scholar stipends, exhibits, travel expenses including meals and lodging, publicity, exhibit fabrication and certain other expenses connected with a project of an extended scope. Project formats can include, but are not limited to, lecture/discussion series, exhibitions, presentations and workshops. The Council encourages programs which serve educators, veterans, and underserved communities in North Carolina.

Submission Timeline: The Large Grant application process consists of two phases, a Letter of Intent and an application (see [www.nchumanities.org](http://www.nchumanities.org) for submission deadlines). To be eligible for funding consideration, applicants can only submit proposals for projects which begin **AFTER November 1<sup>st</sup>.**

## General Application Instructions for All Grant Categories

- **Submission Method:** All applications MUST be submitted using our online application system by midnight on the day of the deadline. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Submission of an application does not guarantee approval.
- **Grant Cycle Deadlines:** All deadlines for which the Council is accepting proposals this fiscal year are posted on our website in November for the upcoming year.
- **Proposal consultations:** We **REQUIRE a consultation call** with NCHC staff to submit a Large grant LOI and **strongly recommend** setting up a consultation for our smaller grants.
  - [Please click here to schedule a phone consultation to discuss your project, our application process, or you proposal with one of our staff members.](#)
  - Please note: while we are always available for questions, a full staff review of an applicant's draft proposal is only available upon request until 3 weeks prior to a submission deadline.

## What You Need to Know Before Applying

### A. What are the humanities?

The humanities are a set of disciplines that help us respond to the fundamental human questions of “who we are and how ought we to live” by encouraging reflection about values and ideas.

**The humanities disciplines, according to the NEH, include but are not limited** “to the study and interpretation of language, both modern and classical; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; and those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods.”

### B. What makes a public humanities program different from other kinds of academic programs?

All of us hold beliefs and assumptions which shape the way we see the world, whether we are examining a contemporary issue or our understanding of an historical event. A public humanities program helps make us more aware of the connection between our values and the views that we express in public and private life. It also encourages us to understand the values of others and how their views may differ from our own.

A good public humanities program makes us think in new ways by presenting different points of view about an issue or a topic and by asking questions without providing specific answers. A humanities program moves beyond facts and information (what, where, and when) to questions of interpretation and analysis (i.e., “What is the meaning of this story?” or “How can we learn from it?” or “Which version of the story do we chose to believe and why?”). Although the particular focus of how we understand human experience may differ from discipline-to-discipline, these questions of interpretation and analysis connect inquiry and meaning to how we live our lives.

The founding legislation of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) states, “Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens” and so public humanities projects go one step further to incorporate how understanding gained from humanities disciplines help us give meaning to our “diverse heritage, traditions, histories, and the current conditions of national life.”

Additionally, the NEH defines humanities projects are those that “seek to understand and explain the significance of what people have thought, done, and achieved, both in the past and

in our time. These projects explore topics like the philosophy, literature, art, and music that people create; the battles that they fight; the politics and societies in which they live; the social forces that unite and divide them; the work that they do; and the religions in which they believe.”

For further discussion and clarification of how the North Carolina Humanities Council interprets the humanities and its application to public programs, please contact Council staff.

### **C. Note for Colleges and Universities**

As led by our organization’s mission and charter, our primary goal is to increase public access to high-quality humanities programming. Proposals from colleges and universities should demonstrate a commitment to reach an audience beyond the campus community. To be competitive, such proposals should show strong community collaboration, a well-defined outreach and publicity plan, and stated audience goals.

## **Restrictions Governing the Use of North Carolina Humanities Council Funds**

Proposal consultations phone calls are great opportunities to discuss your specific budget request and how you want to use grant funds. Please note, the Council **requires a consultation call with NCHC staff for the Large grant LOI** and we **strongly recommend a consultation call for our smaller grants.**

### **A. ELIGIBLE Grant Expenses typically include, but are not limited to:**

- Project Specific Services & Products
  - Scholar honoraria for public lectures, facilitating discussions or workshops
  - Meetings with scholars and other content advisors, program partners, and audience representatives
  - Development and production of curriculum guides and other materials for teachers and students
  - Development and production of program or discussion guides including catalogs, exhibition labels, brochures, digital assets, publications, or other interpretive material
  - Exhibition design and fabrication, as well as crating and shipping
  - Design of any of the interpretive formats to be used
  - Development and construction of interactive program components
  - Program publicity expenses
  - Venue rentals for public presentations
  - Evaluation of the project’s impact
- Project Specific Implementation Planning
  - Planning and conducting project-specific training for docents, discussion coordinators, or other interpretive leaders
  - Research into the humanistic topic
  - Travel to archives, collections, sites, or other resources

Activities funded by North Carolina Humanities Council grants should be open to the public and free or low cost.

### **B. INELIGIBLE Grant Expenses typically include, but are not limited to:**

- The Council CANNOT provide support for non-humanities centered projects, including:
  - Projects that center on the creative or performing arts (theater, dance, music, or visual arts) unless the arts set the stage for a humanities program.
  - Self-help or problem-solving endeavors.

- Develop dramatic adaptations of literary works.
- Projects that center on health and social services unless they set the stage for a humanities program.
- The Council CANNOT provide support to projects that seek to persuade the public, including,
  - Projects that seek to persuade participants of a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view.
  - Projects that advocate a particular program of social action.
- The Council DOES NOT provide support for organizational or operational activities, including:
  - Purchasing organizational non-expendable items, such as equipment, buildings, art, artifacts, etc. above an immaterial value threshold of \$500.
  - Paying salaries to individuals who are administering the grant or supporting the project as part of a salaried job.
  - Paying for professional development or for new staff hires.
  - Paying for general operations, renovation, restoration, rehabilitation, or construction, strategic planning or feasibility studies.
  - Paying for indirect or overhead costs for a project (although these may be used as sources of grant match).
- The Council DOES NOT provide support for publishing, academic, or research activities, including:
  - Paying for projects primarily devoted to research rather than interpretation for the general public.
  - Paying for projects intended primarily for students in formal learning environments or that satisfy requirements for educational degrees or formal professional training (though projects may include components that can be used in classrooms).
  - Paying for preservation, cataloging, or archiving projects that do not include significant interpretive components.
  - Paying to develop print or digital publications (including encyclopedias) that are not an integral part of the larger project for which funding is requested.
- Additionally, the Council CANNOT provide support for the following activities:
  - Paying for expenses for travel or venues in foreign countries
  - Paying for air travel that is not undertaken on U.S. flag air carriers.
  - Paying for food costs, except for the meals of program presenters or consultants
  - Obscene, libelous, indecent, or defamatory content (including hate speech, personal attacks, or material constituting harassment).
  - Popular entertainment for diversion, liquor, or social activities. In conjunction with project activities, applicants may provide refreshments and/or lunches and dinners for their audiences through local cash contributions.
- **Please note, support for media components of projects is limited to \$5,000.**

**C. The Council's Cap on Honoraria/Stipends Paid Using Grant Funds**

Council grant funds used to pay a speaker/scholar/presenter cannot exceed \$400 per individual, per project component. For example, if a scholar gives two lectures during the course of a project they can be paid a maximum of \$400 for each component, for a total of \$800 for the project.

**D. The Council CANNOT fund organizations or individuals that have been Federally Debarred or Suspended. Applicants and Grantees are prohibited from doing business with any organization or person (as a recipient, subrecipient, contractor, or key employee) if they have been debarred or suspended by any federal department or agency.**

## **E. The Council DOES NOT Provide Retroactive Funding**

For Community Engagement and Community Research grants, funding is only available for to support activities that begin AT LEAST eight weeks after the submission deadline. For Large Grants funding is only available for to support activities that begin AFTER 11/1. North Carolina Humanities Council does not offer funding retroactively. While expenses incurred prior to the grant award are not reimbursable from North Carolina Humanities Council funds, these expenses may be used as part of the sponsor's match when accurate documentation of cash/in-kind services have been maintained.

## **Policies Affecting North Carolina Humanities Council Grants**

Please note that North Carolina Humanities Council grants are made with federal funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, (CFDA number: 45.129) and many policies directly relate to statutes and policies governing the use of federal dollars

### **A. Applicant Eligibility**

The North Carolina Humanities Council does not award grants to individuals nor does it grant scholarships or fellowships. The applicant must be a not-for-profit organization (i.e. 501c3 or governmental unit) operating in North Carolina or a not-for-profit whose project focus is of interest to North Carolinians. While the North Carolina Humanities Council welcomes applications that involve educational institutions, the proposed project must reach a broader community of citizens.

### **B. Humanities Content**

Topic Eligibility - The subject of the project must be within or addressed by one or more of the humanities disciplines. The humanities disciplines, according to the NEH, include but are not limited "to the study and interpretation of language, both modern and classical; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; and those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods."

- The North Carolina Humanities Council cannot fund projects which center on the creative or performing arts (theatre, dance, music, or visual arts) unless the arts set the stage for a humanities program.
- The North Carolina Humanities Council cannot fund projects which advocate social or political action as public funds cannot be used to advocate personal/political points of view.

Humanities Scholars - must be involved in both the planning and implementation of North Carolina Humanities Council funded projects.

### **C. Required Grantee Cost-Share Ratio and Tracking**

The North Carolina Humanities Council never provides more than a third of the resources needed to fully implement a project. Applicant organizations and all persons and partners connected with a project must match North Carolina Humanities Council grant monies to support the remaining two thirds of the project with other cash (from the applicant organization's budget or other funders) and/or in-kind resources. This equates to a required 2-to-1 cost-share match for the amount of North Carolina Humanities Council outright funds requested (i.e. if you request \$2,000 you must match at least \$4,000).

**Cash and in-kind contributions to a project that are provided by a grantee are acceptable as cost sharing when such contributions meet the following criteria:**

- they must be verifiable from the grantee's records;
- they must not be included as contributions for any other federally-assisted program;

- they must be necessary and reasonable for the proper and efficient accomplishment of project objectives;
- they must be types of charges that would be allowable under the cost principles;
- they must be used to support activities that are included in the approved project work plan; and
- they must be incurred during the period of performance.

Any contribution that a grantee makes to a project must be based either on the cost incurred to provide that contribution or, in the case of donated buildings or equipment, on depreciation or a use allowance that is computed in accordance with the applicable cost principles. When a grantee is not able to calculate the exact cost involved in contributing its own equipment, space, services, etc. to the project, then the grantee must indicate in the project budget the basis for determining the value of the contribution. Any program income should be used to meet the cost sharing or matching requirement.

#### **D. Standard of Conduct**

The NEH and Council stipulate that officers, employees, and agents of the project sponsor will neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from prospective contractors or parties to the project who might hope to receive financial or other benefit from being associated with it. Violation of these restrictions could result in revocation of the grant by the North Carolina Humanities Council.

#### **E. Conflict of Interest**

Recipients of grants from the North Carolina Humanities Council must be careful to avoid real or apparent conflicts of interest in disbursement of grant funds. Such a conflict would arise if, for example, the project director or head of the sponsoring organization chose a spouse or relative to receive North Carolina Humanities Council funds in return for services rendered to the project. The range of people prohibited from receiving North Carolina Humanities Council funds without special approval include immediate family members, spouses, business partners, or employers of the people who make decisions on participants in the grant for the sponsor. Violation of these restrictions could result in revocation of the grant by the North Carolina Humanities Council.

#### **F. DUNS Number Federal Requirement**

As of October 1, 2010, under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), no organization can receive a subaward without providing a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number to the awarding agency. A DUNS number is a nine-digit number established by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities. This number can be obtained from D&B by telephone at 866 705-5711 or through their website, <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

#### **G. System for Award Management Registration Requirement**

All grant applicants and grantees must be registered in the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) to be eligible for Council grant funds. **It is completely FREE to register your organization in SAM**, but you will need some information to get started. This [Quick Start Guide](#) has been created to assist you with the registration process. Grantees are REQUIRED to maintain a current SAM registration for the duration of their award period.

#### **H. Compliance with Applicable Federal Laws**

Council grants are made using federal funds (CFDA number: 45.129) from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Applicants must be in compliance with federal law and eligible to receive NEH subawards as outlined in the State Humanities Councils General Terms and Conditions, with special attention to Appendix A [“Administrative Requirements that Apply to](#)

Subrecipients” items 8-10. This includes compliance with Nondiscrimination acts (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990), the Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, U.S. Constitution Day Education Program (PL 108-447, Div. J. Sec.111(b)), Coordination of Geographic Information and Related Spatial Data (OMB Circular A-16 and Executive Order 12906)  
Grantee must be compliant with labor standards set forth in 29 CFR Part 505, “Labor Standards on Projects or Productions Assisted by Awards from the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities.”

**I. Research Misconduct Policy**

Applicants and Grantees must be in compliance with NEH Research Misconduct Policy and the Code of Ethics for Projects Related to Native Americans.

**For more information, please contact:**

North Carolina Humanities Council | 320 East 9th Street, Suite 414 | Charlotte, NC 28202

Email: [nchc@nchumanities.org](mailto:nchc@nchumanities.org)

Phone: (704) 687-1520

Fax: (704) 687-1550

## Appendix A: Common Applicant FAQs.

### A. When can I apply for a grant?

The Council offers several grant cycles each year, please check our website [www.nchumanities.org](http://www.nchumanities.org) for the most current cycles and submission deadlines. Cycle deadlines are typically announced in November for the Council's fiscal year which runs November 1<sup>st</sup>- October 31<sup>st</sup>. The Council encourages applicants to apply early in their project process.

### B. How does my organization apply?

The Council only accepts applications and LOIs electronically through our online system.

- **If you are new to the online system, you will need to [create an account prior to applying](#).** Once you have created your account and are logged in to your Applicant Dashboard, click "Apply" in the upper left-hand corner to view an alphabetical list of all open Council opportunities. Please bookmark the login page for ease of access.
- **If you have previously created an account, [please click here to login](#).** Once on your Applicant Dashboard click "Apply" in the upper left-hand corner to view an alphabetical list of all open Council opportunities. Please bookmark the login page for ease of access.

### C. What if an individual has an idea for a project?

The North Carolina Humanities Council does not make grants to individuals. Individuals with a project idea may want to consult with a nonprofit organization in their community to determine whether this group shares their interests and would serve as the applicant for the grant.

### D. Can I consult with Council staff about my project or as I prepare my application/LOI?

Yes! We strongly recommend setting up a phone consultation with NCHC staff as you prepare your proposal for our smaller grants. **Please note:** A phone consultation is REQUIRED for our Large Grant category, prior to the submission of an LOI.

If you would like to discuss your project idea, the application process, or a draft proposal with one of our staff members [please click here to schedule a phone consultation](#).

### E. Can Council staff review a draft of my application/LOI?

Yes! Staff feedback or commentary on an applicant's draft proposal is available upon request until 3 weeks prior to a submission deadline. Please email [cpatton@nchumanities.org](mailto:cpatton@nchumanities.org) to request this service.

### F. What kinds of groups have received grants?

All applicants must be a nonprofit organization or not-for-profit governmental unit with an EIN (Employer Identification Number), current DUNS number registered to their entity, an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). **It is completely FREE to register your organization in SAM**, but you will need some information to get started. This [Quick Start Guide](#) has been created to assist you with the registration process. Grantees are REQUIRED to maintain a current SAM registration for the duration of their award period.

Successful applicants have included libraries, museums, religious institutions, universities, colleges, community colleges, tribal organizations, civic clubs, home-extension units, arts councils, city and county governments, community-based organizations, and ad hoc groups created for the sole purpose of carrying out a project.

### **G. How can my organization find humanities professionals to help us plan and carry out our project?**

A humanities scholar is defined as someone with an advanced degree (at least an M.A.) in a humanities discipline. A wider definition includes cultural experts, such as community elders with special expertise in the life-ways, traditions, and worldviews of particular cultures.

You may also want to contact a university, college, or community college humanities department for help. North Carolina Humanities Council staff can provide advice and assistance identifying humanities scholars who could be willing to participate and have experience in public programs.

### **H. What kinds of project formats are supported?**

Past funded projects have included: reading-and-discussion programs, lectures, conferences, seminars, symposia, exhibits, digital and traditional media projects, discussions following performance activities, oral histories, and teacher workshops. Please see our website for a full list of past funded projects.

Possible projects include, but are not limited to:

- Community conversation series in which diverse residents creatively address community challenges, guided by the perspectives of the humanities.
- Permanent or traveling exhibitions available to public audiences.
- Interpretation of historic sites, houses, neighborhoods, and regions, which might include living history presentations, guided tours, exhibitions, and public programs.
- Proposed projects may also include complementary components that deepen an audience's understanding of a subject. For example, a museum exhibition might be accompanied by a website, mobile app, or discussion programs.

### **I. How will my proposal be evaluated?**

To be competitive within the Council's grant-making program projects must involve humanities scholars, scholarship and engage the public. Proposals will be evaluated according to how well they fit with the mission and goals of the Council and by the following areas:

- Humanities merit and intellectual content
  - Qualifications of project team (both humanists and community leaders)
  - Humanities content is deep and central to the project
- Project Goals and Outcomes
  - Clearly defined and measurable
  - Appropriate Evaluation Plan
  - Anticipated impact of the program
- Project Implementation Plans
  - Appropriate program format and resources engaged
  - Clear public engagement with defined audiences
  - Defined work plan and clear budget
- Project's contribution to the Council's current priorities in our commitment to supporting public humanities programs throughout the state.

All proposals must:

- Be grounded in sound humanities scholarship
- Be public in nature. Either reaching a broad public audience or a particular group underserved by the humanities.
- Provide analytical interpretation to deepen public understanding of significant humanities questions
- Involve a team of humanities scholars and community leaders who contribute to all

- phases of the project
- Offer engaging content approached through an appropriate variety of perspectives
- Encourage dialogue and the exchange of ideas.

## J. What makes a proposal more competitive?

Competitive applications strongly demonstrate the following evaluation criteria:

1. Humanities merit and intellectual content
  - a. Competitive proposals go beyond the mere presentation of factual information about a project to examine the larger significance of the subject and the humanities scholarship informing the project; the extent to which the project offers an analytical perspective on the themes and ideas that underlie it to stimulate critical reflection.
  - b. Competitive proposals must convey a solid grasp of the project's subject and the related scholarship.
  - c. The project team for competitive proposals include all of the following: strong humanists, community leaders and stakeholders, and established institutional partners.
  - d. The qualifications and potential contributions of the advising humanists/scholars should be clearly connected to their roles in the project.
2. Project Goals and Outcomes
  - a. Competitive proposals have clearly identified goals that demonstrate why it is important that the project be conducted and what success looks like for their project. Competitive proposals have specific expected outcomes for their project activities (i.e. what behaviors or attitudes will be shifted as a result of this project).
  - b. Competitive projects incorporate both activity/process measures AND outcome measures (i.e. activity – completed 3 workshops serving 200 educators AND outcome - 90% of educators in the workshop stated they are very likely or extremely likely to incorporate this new content into their classroom practice)
  - c. Competitive proposals have a clear evaluation plan on how they will collect data to assess how the effectiveness of their activities in generating the anticipated impact.
3. Project Implementation Plans
  - a. Competitive proposals select appropriate and creativity formats to deliver their project's humanities content which are relevant to their intended audiences and project themes, and ideas.
  - b. Competitive proposals clearly demonstrate how their project activities will effectively communicate an analytical interpretation of their subject matter for public audiences.
  - c. Competitive proposals have creative and strong public engagement woven throughout their project activities.
  - d. Competitive proposals clearly convey humanities content and increase the accessibility of humanistic ideas.
  - e. A competitive proposal has a clear and specific budget with reasonable project costs and intends to use grant funds for eligible expenses.
  - f. A competitive proposal's budget includes resources from multiple partners or advisors that will ensure the project will achieve its goals in a timely and efficient manner.

All other considerations being equal, the preference is given to projects that provide free access to materials and events produced with grant funds.

**K. When will decisions be made on my application/LOI?**

Application review times vary by grant category.

- For our Community Engagement and Community Research grant categories, decisions are typically announced a month following the submission deadline.
- For our Large Grants, decisions are typically announced on the LOI phase in May and on the application phase in September.

**Thank you for reviewing this document, if you didn't see your question covered, please reach out to our staff at 704.687.1520 or email [cpatton@nchumanities.org](mailto:cpatton@nchumanities.org).**