



“Sharing Our Past—Shaping Our Future”

Grant Program Guidelines

2009-2010

**Vermont Humanities Council
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Grant Program Guidelines

The Vermont Humanities Council (VHC) is an educational non-profit affiliated with the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Council's mission is to deliver humanities programming throughout Vermont in order to *create a state in which every individual reads, participates in public affairs, and continues to learn throughout life*. The Council offers a dozen programs, more than half of which serve the general public. The remaining programs target various groups. Between the two types of programs, VHC offers something for nearly all ages and for people from all walks of life.

The Council's **Grant Program** is a public program that supports non-profit organizations conducting various projects related to the humanities. The humanities include: archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; history; jurisprudence; languages, both modern and ancient; linguistics; literature; philosophy; and the history, theory and criticism of the arts. *The Council will reject outright any project that does not involve at least one humanities discipline.* (For more information, see "Addendum One: What Are the Humanities?" (pg 5) , or visit the website of the National Endowment for the Humanities at www.neh.gov.)

The Council encourages brevity in its grant applications. Toward that end, we ask that your application be no longer than ten pages. These pages must include a two page form supplied by the Council as well as an itemized budget. Therefore, the narrative portion must be no longer than seven pages (and may certainly be shorter). The Vermont Humanities Council does not require an application fee for its grants program.

Applications for amounts up to \$5,000 are considered twice a year.

The Council accepts applications primarily for the following types of projects:

I. Programs for the Public

Like the humanities themselves, these programs may be multi-faceted. Public programming would include lecture series, museum programming, community projects, or programming meant to explain or augment the humanities content of an event. The Council prefers all events to be free and open to the public, but understands that, as one component of a larger event, admission may need to be charged.

Example: An *ad hoc* group of citizens in Essex wished to host a community-wide celebration of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called *Sharing Our Stories*. They applied to the Council for a small grant to help pay for a variety of community activities. The project was an unprecedented success and has begun a tradition in Essex that will continue for many years.

Example: The Barre Opera House requested funding to support a lecture/demonstration program in conjunction with a performance by the French Canadian group La Volee de Castors. The program focused on the history of the music and French Canadian culture. The goal was to appeal to a broader segment of the community than normally attends Opera House performances.

II. Educational Outreach

The Council supports efforts by schools and other organizations for curriculum development. Certain guidelines apply, however. School curriculum must be based on the Vermont Framework of Standards and include a plan for distribution to other schools, region- or statewide. Proposals from museums or historic sites should address the problem of transporting students to and from their location.

Example: The Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium received a grant to develop curricula for their exhibit *Pathways to History*. The exhibit, which paired historic Native American artifacts with those created by living artists, was a springboard to programs explaining the history and culture of Native Americans. In addition to hosting local school groups, the curriculum was made available to schools statewide through the museum's Web site.

III. Teacher Enrichment

Organizations may apply for funds to support seminars or workshops for teachers at any grade level. The topic of these programs should be humanities-based and easily transferable to the classroom. Funds may be requested for the programs themselves, or for providing scholarships to Vermont teachers.

Example: Vermont Courage to Teach received a grant to support a professional development program for public school teachers and principals involving facilitated book and poetry discussions. The program focuses on the *Why* and *Who* of teaching rather than the *What* and *How*.

Please see Addendum Two: Grants Awarded in 2008 (pg. 6) for a list of successful proposals.

Applications related to the following areas are encouraged during 2008-2009:

- ✓ Projects related to the Lake Champlain Quadricentennial in 2009 (400th anniversary of Samuel de Champlain's naming of the lake)
- ✓ Projects related to the Civil War leading up to War's the 150th anniversary beginning in 2011
- ✓ American history and culture; founding values (relating to the NEH *We the People* initiative; see www.wethepeople.gov)
- ✓ Civics; community building
- ✓ Collaboration with other Vermont non-profits

Grant applications will *not* be considered for:

- any project that does not have strong humanities content;
- for-profit organizations;
- individuals;
- retroactive funding;
- advocacy-based, biased, or politically-charged projects;
- projects focused principally on literacy;
- projects that are social/human services-related;
- musical/dramatic productions, visual art, or creative writing projects, i.e. the "making" or "doing" of art as opposed to the history, theory, and criticism of it;
- grants to fund salaries;
- research grants;

- projects that are not timely enough to include credit to the Council in publicity;
- scholars-in-residence;
- classroom augmentation (such as supplemental classroom texts or guest speakers);
- school events not open to the public;
- book publishing without programmatic component
- any organization that has an open grant with the Council*

***Note to prior grantees:** If your organization has received a grant from VHC in the past, please be sure you describe the success of the previous grant in your current proposal. Explain how the new project will build upon that success, and what efforts you have taken or will take to identify other sources of support. *Applications for continuing/new support will only be considered when recipients have submitted a final report on the previous grant. Any one organization cannot have two open grants from VHC simultaneously.*

For more information on the kinds of projects VHC will not fund, please see Addendum Three: Sample Rejected Projects (pg 7).

Grant Application Process

A letter of intent is required. Deadline for the letters is March 2nd for the spring round and September 15th for the fall round. Letters should include a brief overview of the proposed project, the amount to be requested, and a minimal budget indicating the areas the Council would be funding. The letter should not exceed two pages. Applicants are notified within one week of the deadline of the decision. VHC staff may encourage or discourage an application or suggest changes to the proposal.

Final deadlines are April 10th and November 2nd. Applications must be postmarked no later than the deadline. Applications received earlier are always welcome. Applicants should submit five copies of the proposal as well as one copy of the organization's audited financial statement.

Final decision on all applications lies with the VHC Board of Directors. The Board meets the second week of May and the first week of December to review and act on grant applications. Board meetings are open to the public. For exact date, time, and location of meetings please contact the VHC office. The staff will inform the applicant of the Board's decision within two business days following the Board meeting. The Board may approve the proposal unconditionally, approve it with modifications, or deny it with or without explanation.

Do I Qualify?

The staff of the Vermont Humanities Council welcomes inquires about projects that you are considering. We invite you to call the Council before submitting your letter of intent to be sure that your project falls within our mission and guidelines. You may contact the Council at any time with questions or concerns during the grant process.

Please contact: Jessica Santucci, Community Programs Assistant, (802) 262-2626 ext. 304 or jsantucci@vermonthumanities.org.

ADDENDUM ONE: What are the Humanities?

Humanities... the branches of learning that investigate human constructs and concerns as opposed to natural processes and social relations.

The term *humanities* includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following:

- ❖ Language, both modern and classical – e.g. French, German, Latin, Arabic, etc.
- ❖ Linguistics – the study of languages and language systems.
- ❖ Literature – writings in prose or verse having an excellence in form or expression and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest.
- ❖ History – a chronological record of significant events (as effecting a nation or institution) often including an explanation of their causes.
- ❖ Jurisprudence – a system or body of law; the science or philosophy of law.
- ❖ Philosophy – a search for a general understanding of values and reality by chiefly speculative rather than observational means.
- ❖ Archaeology – the scientific study of material remains (as fossil relics, artifacts, and monuments) of past human life and activities.
- ❖ Comparative religion – the comparison of personal sets or institutionalized systems of attitudes, beliefs, and practices having to do with the service and worship of a god or gods or the supernatural.
- ❖ Ethics – the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation.
- ❖ The *history, criticism and theory* of the arts – painting/drawing, sculpture, music, drama, writing, etc. To clarify: The Arts form their own branches of learning. The *study* of them is a humanities discipline. In other words, a theatrical performance is an art; a related discussion about the history and cultural significance of the play would fall under the humanities. Writing a novel is an art; exploring the context of that novel and the writing process with young writers qualifies as a humanities discipline.
- ❖ Those aspects of social sciences (economics, political science, psychology, etc.) which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods.
- ❖ The study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.

ADDENDUM TWO: Grants Approved in 2008

Spring 2008 Awards

- **Building a Better Brattleboro**, Brattleboro Literary Festival, \$3,000.
- **Friends of Robert Frost**, Exhibits at the Robert Frost Stone House Museum, \$1,300.
- **Johnson State College**, Life in Chittenden County History Project, \$2,500.
- **The Northern Forest Center**, Ways of the Woods Mobile Museum, \$5,000.
- **Park-McCullough House Association**, Voices of Victorian Vermont, \$4,600.
- **Opera Theatre of Weston**, Storybook Opera Project, \$3,259.
- **Park-McCullough House Association**, Education Program, \$1,846.
- **Stern Center for Language and Learning**, Burlington Book Festival, \$2,500.
- **Vermont Division for Historic Preservation**, Lake Champlain Voyages of Discovery: Bringing History Home, \$1,999.

Fall 2008 Awards

- **African Literature Association**, Bringing African Diaspora into the Classroom, \$2,400.
- **Focus on Film**, 2009 Green Mountain Film Festival, \$1,625.
- **Greensboro Wonder & Wisdom**, An Intergenerational Oral History Project, \$1,950.
- **Main Street Museum**, Tramps, Hobos and Transients at the Edge, \$2,000.
- **My Story Matters**, Vermont history conference for high schools, \$1,200.
- **Rokeby Museum**, Speaking Truth to Power, \$3,100.
- **The Vermont Newspaper**, Vermont Public Television, \$7,500.
- **Weston Playhouse**, 2009 Teachers Workshop, \$2,800.
- **Young Writer's Project**, A series of five online forums connecting students with Vermont authors, \$5,500.

ADDENDUM THREE: Sample Rejected Projects

These sample projects are entirely made-up but highlight some of the most common un-fundable requests that VHC receives: arts projects vs. humanities, advocacy-based projects, human services projects, classroom augmentation, and book publishing.

Example: An organization seeks funding to put on one of Shakespeare's plays.

Reason for denial: The *study* of the arts (history, criticism, and theory) is a humanities discipline. However, the act of performing a play is an art.

What would make a better proposal? Seek funding to have Shakespearean scholars discuss the history and cultural significance of the play following the performances.

Example: An organization wishes to hold a lecture series focused on how to stop racism in Vermont.

Reason for denial: Although laudable, this type of project is considered advocacy since its purpose is to promote a cause. VHC cannot support advocacy-based projects. Nor does this project have any evident humanities content.

What would make a better proposal? Propose a lecture series that examines how various historical events, conditions, and cultural interactions of different groups of people have influenced race-relations in Vermont today. Or, create a reading and discussion series that includes titles, some of which are fiction, in which race relations are a central theme. Use literature to explore the heritages, experiences, and lives of people of different races.

Example: An organization seeks funding to teach English to refugees in Vermont.

Reason for denial: This project is more of a social service, meant to help a disadvantaged segment of the population, than a project focused on the humanities.

What would make a better proposal? Create a literature-based discussion program using children's books on various humanities themes to help the group develop a love of reading. (Or, better yet, simply apply to run a VHC Connections program which does the same thing.)

Example: A school wishes to do a special unit on the Civil Rights Movement and requests funding for books on the topic and to bring a guest speaker into the classroom.

Reason for denial: While the Civil Rights Movement is clearly a humanities topic and VHC does offer funding for curriculum development, this project would reach a limited number of students for a short span of time and does not include plans for distribution of the curriculum to other schools. Therefore, the proposal is more classroom augmentation—paying for a classroom set of books and a guest speaker—than true curriculum development or educational outreach.

What would make a better proposal? Collaborate with other schools or community organizations (such as museums, historical societies, or libraries) to broaden the scope of the project perhaps including school exchanges or field trips to related cultural organizations. Also, devise a plan to share the curriculum and materials with other teachers and schools.

Example: An organization seeks funding to publish a book on some aspect of Vermont history and to donate copies to local libraries.

Reason for denial: VHC grants are meant for public *programs*. Without any kind of program element attached to such a project, it is hard to know if libraries and people would utilize the books once they are published.

What would make this a better proposal? Collaborate with various libraries to host speakers, lead discussion groups, or hold other special events to augment the information presented in the books.