Vermont Humanities
Because Ideas Matter

Grant Guidelines

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Program Overview

About VHC: A statewide nonprofit organization founded in 1974 and a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Vermont Humanities Council (VHC) believes that engagement with the world of ideas, in interaction with others, contributes uniquely to richer lives, stronger communities, and a more humane society. Its mission is "to seeks to engage all Vermonters in the world of ideas, foster a culture of thoughtfulness and inspire a lifelong love of reading and learning." With 14 different kinds of programs and over 25,000 people attending nearly 1,000 events in 2017, the Council offers something for people of nearly all ages and from all walks of life.

The Council's Grant Program supports humanities-related projects of other non-profit organizations. Please note:

- These grants are primarily focused on **public programming, curriculum development, or teacher enrichment projects**.
- The Council will consider **new projects, as well as already established projects**, including those that have been funded by the VHC in the past.
- **Previous project funding is no guarantee of future funding**; returning grantees should demonstrate growth and learning from previous years.
- **Strong humanities content** is a high priority in consideration for funding, with VHC funds often directed towards humanities experts augmenting the scholarship of a project. For a full explanation of what the humanities encompass, see page 5.
- These small project grants are **not intended to cover staff costs**. VHC encourages applicants to fund these expenses of the project from other sources.
- **The maximum award is $5,000, but most are smaller.** In many cases, partial grants are awarded.
- Grantees must provide, at minimum, **a one-to-one cost share** (which may consist of cash and/or in-kind contributions).

How to Apply

1. Read this document in full to ensure that your project is eligible.
2. Submit a Letter of Intent summarizing your project. VHC staff will review your submission and respond within one week of the Letter of Intent deadline. Staff may encourage or discourage a full proposal, or suggest changes.
3. Submit a Grant Proposal according to the instructions on pages 9-13.

Final decision lies with the VHC Board of Directors. Proposals are considered twice a year. The Board decides on Grant Proposals at its meetings in May and December. VHC staff will inform applicants of the Board's decision within five business days following the Board meeting. The Board may approve a proposal unconditionally, approve it with modifications, award partial funding, or deny it.

If the Board votes to fund your project, VHC will supply additional paperwork and instructions. Grantees must:

1. Return the signed Grant Agreement within two weeks to accept the grant, or notify the Council that they choose to decline the funds. Grant funds will be paid upon receipt of the signed Agreement
2. .Provide publicity information for any activities open to the general public as soon as details are available. This requirement should be kept in mind throughout the span of the project.
3. Carry out the project, submitting a Final Report within 90 days after the project ends. Please ensure that you will be able to comply with VHC's reporting requirements before completing an application.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for a VHC grant, the applicant must:

- Be a 501(c)(3) public charity, government entity, school, or institution of higher education. Groups without such a designation may apply through a non-profit organization that agrees to act as a fiscal agent and to accept responsibility for meeting the terms of the grant award.
- Agree to observe all federal and state nondiscrimination statutes, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Make a request for no more than $5,000 and be able to provide, at minimum, a one-to-one cost share, which may consist of cash and/or in-kind contributions.
- Not currently have an open grant or outstanding final report with VHC. Applications for continuing/new support will only be considered when recipients have submitted a final report on the previous grant.
- Serve a Vermont audience (but the organization applying for a grant need not be headquartered in Vermont).

Grant applications will not be considered for:

- any project that does not have strong humanities content
- general operating expenses
- for-profit organizations
- individuals
- retroactive funding
- advocacy-based, biased, or partisan-based projects
- projects focused principally on literacy
- projects that principally provide social/human services
- 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
- research projects
- projects that are not timely enough to acknowledge the Council's support in publicity
- scholars-in-residence
- classroom augmentation (such as supplemental classroom texts or guest speakers)
- school events that are not open to the public
- book publishing

Types of Projects Funded

The Council funds primarily the following types of projects:

1. Programs for the Public

Examples of public programs include lecture series, museum programs, community projects, or programs meant to explain or augment the humanities content of an event. VHC funds are often directed towards enlisting humanities experts in roles such as speakers, advisors, or discussion facilitators. The Council prefers all events to be free and open to the public, but understands that, as one component of a larger event, reasonable admission fees 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 Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. called Sharing Our Stories. Through a sponsoring nonprofit organization, 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 may 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.

2. Educational Outreach

The Council supports curriculum development by schools and other organizations. Certain guidelines apply: school curriculum projects should align with the Common Core State Standards and must include a plan for distribution to other schools or region- or statewide. Proposals from museums or historic sites should address transportation of students to and from the site.

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

3. Teacher Enrichment

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

Example: The Vermont Studio Center received a grant to support professional development for teachers of writing in Vermont public schools through stipends for VSC summer residencies.

What are the Humanities?

We define "humanities" as the branches of learning that investigate human constructs and concerns as opposed to natural processes and social relations. This 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 (such 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.
- Those aspects of social sciences (economics, political science, psychology, etc.) that 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.

What is the Difference Between the Humanities and the Arts?

Humanities content includes the **history, criticism, and theory** of the arts – the intellectual study of the literary, visual, or performing arts, as opposed to their creation or presentation.

For example, a theatrical performance is an art; a related discussion about the history and cultural significance of the play falls under the humanities. Writing a novel is an art; a workshop exploring the context of that novel and its writing process qualifies as a humanities discipline.

VHC awards grants only to projects with strong humanities content. Proposals to fund the performance or creation of artwork will not be considered.

Recent Grant Awards

Spring 2017 Grant Awards

- **To Sing of Common Things Lecture Series**— Clemmons Family Farm, $1500
- **History, Race, and Inclusive Education** — The Flow of History, $2000
- **History Camp 2017** — Swanton Public Library, $1000
- **Bookstock Literary Festival 2017** — Bookstock Literary Festival, $2000
- **Burlington Book Festival 2017** — Burlington Book Festival, $2000
- **Oral Histories of Canaan, Vermont** — Alice M. Ward Memorial Library, $1400
- **Brattleboro Literary Festival** — Brattleboro Literary Festival, $2500
- **Afro-Atlantic Sacred Arts** — Robert Hull Fleming Museum, $3000
- **Alnobak: Wearing Our Heritage** — Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, $2000
- **Bringing the World to our Community** — One World Library Project, $2500
- **Time Travelers Camp: Medicine In The Kingdom** — Orleans County Historical Society, $1000
- **Latchis Arts Enriched Film Screenings** — Latchis Arts, Inc., $1000

Fall 2017 Grant Awards

- **Solzhenitsyn at 100** — Vermont Historical Society, $3000
- **Telling Our Stories: An Oral History of Place, Race, and Education** — Goddard College, $1000
- **Community Conservation Series - Relationship Across Difference** — Shelburne Farms, $2000
- **Coming of Age: An Exploration of Identity Creation in Film —** Focus on Film, Inc., $2600
- **Public Philosophy Week** — University of Vermont Philosophy Department, $1500
- **2018 Teacher Workshop** — Weston Playhouse Theatre Company, $2000
- **PoemCity 2018** — Kellogg-Hubbard Library, $4000
- **Ambrose Classical Play Lecture Series** — University of Vermont Department of Classics, $2000

Sample Rejected Projects

These sample projects highlight some of the most common ineligible requests that VHC receives: performance projects with no humanities component, human services projects, classroom augmentation, and book publishing.

1. **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 falls under the arts.
   - *What would make a better proposal?* Seek funding to have Shakespearean scholars discuss the history and cultural significance of the play before or after the performances.

2. **Example:** An organization seeks funding to teach English to refugees in Vermont.
   - *Reason for denial:* This project is more of a social service effort meant to help a disadvantaged segment of the population than it is 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, which will help the group develop a love of reading.

3. **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:* Although the history of the Civil Rights Movement is clearly a humanities topic, VHC offers funding for curriculum development and not classroom augmentation. 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.
   - *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. Also, devise a plan to share the curriculum and materials with other teachers and schools.

4. **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 evaluate whether libraries and community members 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 book after it has been published.

Proposal Review Criteria

Final decision on all applications lies with the VHC Board of Directors. The Board may approve a proposal unconditionally, approve it with modifications, award partial funding, or deny it. The grant review committee utilizes the following criteria to assist in making funding decisions.

Humanities Content
- Are the humanities central to the project?
- Are the issues, concepts, questions, or themes the project seeks to address clear?
- Does the project include appropriately broad points of view or approaches to the issues being addressed?
- How does the project advance the mission of the Vermont Humanities Council?

Audience and Evaluation
- What is the size and makeup (e.g. general public or targeted population) of the intended audience?
- How will this project benefit the intended audience and broader community?
- Are the topic, format, and schedule of the project appropriate for the intended audience?
- Does the proposal include an effective publicity plan for attracting the intended audience?
- Is there a cost to participants? (Fees are allowable, but should be reasonable and in line with the project's funding model.)
- Is the evaluation plan realistic and tied to the project's established goals?

Scope of Work and Budget
- Are the project's objectives clearly stated and achievable?
- Is the format workable and appropriate?
- Is the schedule realistic?
- Is the budget realistic in terms of the scale of the project and the anticipated results?
- Is there a plan to bring in the required nonfederal contribution?
- Are the costs reasonable and justified?
- Are the expenses that the VHC grant will cover allowable as explained in the detailed budget instructions?

Organizational Capacity and Collaboration
- Are the scholars and other personnel involved well qualified for the roles they will play?
- Does the sponsoring organization have the capacity to implement the proposed project successfully?
- How strong is the need for grant support?
- Are there collaborators identified that strengthen the impact of the project?
- If this is a return grantee, has the applicant demonstrated growth and learning from previous years?

Submitting a Proposal

Proposal Documents

Complete proposals consist of four components:

    A. Grant Proposal Form
    B. Project Narrative
    C. Project Budget
    D. Letter(s) of Support

A.   **Grant Proposal Form.** Complete the [Grant Proposal Form](#) on our website. **This form must be completed in one session; if closed, it will not save your progress.** (A PDF version is also available – see page 11 for instructions.)

     The online form requires the following. (For screenshots of the fields and questions required in preparation for submitting the form, see [Sample Proposal Documents](#).)

- Names and contact information for the applying organization, the head of that organization, and the Project Director who will serve as the main point of contact for this grant. (Head of Organization and Project Director may be the same person. If a separate organization is acting as fiscal agent, contact information for that organization is also required.).
- A project title and abstract, which will be used in VHC documents and publicity materials.
- Project start and end dates
- The applying organization's financial information, including annual board-approved budget revenue and expenses for both the current and most recent fiscal years.
- PDF uploads of your Project Narrative, Budget, and Letter(s) of Support, explained below.

B.   **Project Narrative.** In a typed document, please respond to the following questions as briefly as possible. These questions (1-9) should be numbered and titled as below, but it is not necessary to repeat the question text. This document should be **no more than four pages total**.

1. *Organization Profile:* Briefly profile your organization, specifying the type of work you do, the scope and makeup of the community you serve, and the size and background of your staff. Why is your organization well positioned to carry out this project? What efforts you have taken or will take to identify other sources of support? If your organization has previously received a VHC grant for a similar project, please describe the success of the previous grant and how the new project will build upon that success.
2. *Project Summary:* In a short paragraph, summarize the proposal, indicating what you intend to do, how you intend to do it, and the goals of the project. It should be clear from this summary that the project falls within the scope of VHC's Grant Guidelines.
3. *Need:* Describe the need for this project. Include a description of expected participants (e.g. general public or targeted audience, such as elementary students, teachers, etc.).
4. *Goals:* Describe the project's goals, which should be consistent with VHC's mission: to engage all Vermonters in the world of ideas, foster a culture of thoughtfulness and inspire a lifelong love of

reading and learning. Be specific about the humanities content of the project, explaining the role of each humanities discipline your project touches on. Include the long-term impact of the project on individuals and communities, and the possibility of the project's replication and future sustainability.

5. *Major activities:* Please describe the major program activities (including date, time, and location if this information is available). All event locations must be accessible to people with disabilities.

6. *Major collaborators:* Please list the major collaborators – individuals and/or organizations – including key humanities scholars, community groups, libraries, museums, etc. Specify individuals' affiliations, qualifications, and roles in the project.

7. *Outreach and publicity:* What is your publicity plan? How will you get the word out to potential participants and to the community at large? How will you credit your sponsors? Please specify actions you will take and publicity outlets you will use (e.g. posters, calendar listings, press releases, direct mailings, etc.). You will need to credit the Council in all publicity.

8. *Evaluation:* Please describe how you intend to evaluate the project's success. An evaluation should assess the impact of the project on participants and/or the community, the quality of the project's humanities content, and to what extent its goals were met. A written report is required by the Council no later than 90 days after completion of the project.

9. *Cost to participants:* Please indicate whether your project is free and open to the public. Events do not have to be free, but if you charge, your detailed budget must show those fees as "program income" as part of the cost share.

C. **Project Budget.** Please attach a copy of your itemized project budget, including:

- **Income:** This section should show all income sources for your project. It should include any admission fees or other program income, cash on hand that you plan to use, in-kind donations, and the proposed VHC grant. Please indicate whether other funding sources are pending or confirmed. Grantees must provide, at minimum, a 1:1 cost share (which may consist of cash and/or in-kind contributions).

- **Expenses:** Please include all expenses to be incurred with this project, including payment to outside humanities scholars, staff salaries, supplies, travel, publicity, printing, and postage. Our grant funds are not intended to cover staff costs. VHC encourages applicants to fund these expenses of the project from other sources. Council grants may only cover costs incurred during the project period specified.

You are welcome to add a brief budget narrative within this file if you think that it will help us better understand the budget. You can access a sample project budget and our optional Grant Budget Template (Excel) [on our website](#).

D. **Letter(s) of Support.** Include at least one and no more than 3 letters of support from community members or humanities scholars **unaffiliated with the project** who can attest to the potential quality and impact of the program and to your organization's capacity to undertake a successful project. Letters should not be from the project director, fiscal officer, or anyone employed or paid by the sponsoring agency or agencies.

Advance Review (Optional)
If desired, VHC will review an electronic draft for **administrative and formatting compliance** if submitted at least seven business days before the final deadline.

Submitting Materials
Preferred: Submit the Grant Proposal Form, with attachments, on our website. If completed successfully, you will see a confirmation screen and receive an automated email response.

If you are unable to use the online form, please download the **PDF** Grant Proposal Form. Complete and sign the form, and then submit it with the Project Narrative, Budget, and Letter(s) of Support using either method below:

- **Electronic:** Save or scan the proposal documents as a single PDF file and email it as an attachment to community@vermonthumanities.org. The email subject line must read:
    "VHC Grant Application – [your organization]".
  You will receive a confirmation email when your submission has been received.
- **Mail:** Ship one copy of the application documents, printed single-sided, to the Vermont Humanities Council, attn. Community Programs, at the address below.

Your complete application must be received in the Council offices by the close of business on the deadline.

Thank you for your interest in VHC's grant program. Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

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