Major & Mini Grants
FAQs

1. What kinds of projects is MHC excited to fund?

We are excited to support projects with rich, well-developed **humanities content**, strong **participation from a topic expert**, **robust support from partners** in the community, and plans to reach **broad and diverse public audiences**. Grant awards must be **matched by cash and/or in-kind support**.

2. Humanities content…what's that?

The main goal of the humanities is to develop awareness and understanding of people's lived experience, and to put it into words. Any aspect of human culture -- literature, art, music, history, laws, ethics, philosophy – becomes humanities content when participants in the program or project are invited to deepen their understanding of the work and its context through interpretation, analysis, or discussion.

Humanities programs and projects can take many forms: exhibitions, conferences, film/video productions, podcasts/radio shows, discussions, performances framed by interpretation. What they have in common is a commitment to involving people in thinking, reflecting, and talking about important aspects of what it can be like to be alive.

One of the hallmarks of the humanities is the **ethic of nonjudgmental discussion**. All projects must evidence a spirit of inquiry, a balance between critical and celebratory perspectives, and provide a range of viewpoints and informed opinions, consistent with MHC's non-partisan mission. This is especially true when projects treat highly charged issues. Please note that MHC does not fund projects that promote a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view or discriminate against persons or groups.

3. Participation from a topic expert…who can that be? Why involve them?

The participation of at least one topic expert is requited. Someone with deep expertise in the topic you're working on can serve as a sounding board and resource. They can help you

make sure your project is addressing the most interesting and important elements of the topic, and that it's framed in a way that really draws participants into thinking about it and using it to reflect on their own experience.

Deep expertise might include having extensive professional and/or life experience on the subject; recognition by a cultural community as someone appropriate to teach or interpret traditional cultural knowledge, such as a tribal elder, historian, storyteller, or traditional practitioner; or an advanced degree in a humanities field, such as a university professor or graduate student; extensive professional and/or life experience on the subject.

4. Robust support from partners in the community...what does this mean?

Securing support from other organizations in the community can help your project reach a wider audience and accomplish more – as well as creating opportunities for further collaboration within the community.

This might involve partnering with a library, historical society, or other community organization who may already reach your intended audience, to help with outreach. We think it is important to involve people who the project affects or is about in the project early on and in the planning.

5. Broad and diverse public audience...how important is this?

Programming that serves the communities of Maine is at the heart of what we do – so outreach needs to be a central part of your project. Your outreach can aim to engage the public at large, or engage specific audiences, like professional, ethnic, or community groups.

Our preference is for programs to be free. If a fee is charged, participation costs should be reasonable for the type of program being presented.

6. A cash match and/or in-kind support...what does this mean?

The grant award must be matched 1:1 by either cash or in-kind support, or a combination of both, which may come from a third-party or directly from the applicant. In other words, 50% of the total project costs must come from sources other than an MHC award. In-kind contributions may include time and materials, office space and equipment, travel, donated services, and other non-cash donations. It is important to MHC to show that our grant funds leverage additional resources, so please include ALL match, even when it is more than 50%.

7. What kinds of projects are ineligible?

MHC doesn't fund:

- Projects that engage in advocacy or discriminate against persons or groups.
- Projects that promote a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view.
- Projects that support specific public policies or legislation.

- Grants to individuals without a fiscal sponsor.
- Payment to students for projects that are being done for academic credit.
- Grants primarily for group or individual travel.
- Projects designed as fundraising ventures.
- Subawards.
- Capital expenditures, construction, or restoration costs.
- Normal organizational operating costs, indirect or overhead expenses unrelated to the project.
- Projects that have NO connection to Maine or the humanities.

8. Who is eligible to apply?

Organizations with 501c3 status, **government organizations** (such as a federally recognized Indian tribal governments or organizations or state/local/city governments), **churches**, or **education organizations** (such as schools or school districts, or public or private institutions of higher education) are eligible to apply without fiscal sponsorship.

If your organization is **NOT** a 501c3, or equivalent (listed above) you will need a **FISCAL SPONSOR** for your project. The National Council of Nonprofits has a helpful resource sheet on fiscal sponsorship.

9. Who is NOT eligible to apply?

- For-profit organizations and political or advocacy organizations.

- If you currently have an overdue final report for a previous MHC grant, or you have an open Major or Mini Grant, you are not eligible to apply

- **An exception to this:** organizations may be awarded both a MHC *and* an Arts & Humanities Grant in the same year.

- While we do on occasion make awards to the same organization in consecutive years for exceptional projects, we do not make this a regular practice.

10. How do I apply?

Applications are submitted online using our form.

- You can preview the application for the grant you are interested in on our website.

- When the grant period is open, click on the link to the application form.

- **Saving your work**: You can save your application and come back to it later by clicking the "Save and Resume Later" bar at the bottom of each page. When you do, you will see a message pop up with a unique link to use when you or a

colleague want to resume work. **Save this link, as this is the only way to access your saved application**. We are not able to access applications until they are submitted to us. The link is good for 30 days. **Please note: Every time you click "Save and Resume later" you will be given a brand–new link** to use to access your application. You have the option to have the link emailed to you.

11. We've never filled out a grant application before. Can you give us some advice?

Yes! Email the Grants Team: Lizz, Kyle, Samaa – we can counsel you through the entire process.

12. We've applied for grants before – should we talk to you before applying?

We strongly recommend it. Past applicants have found it very useful to check in with us about their idea and get advice – we can recommend topic experts, for example, or help you to fine-tune your project to better fit our guidelines.

13. Whom should we contact if we still have questions?

If you need help determining whether you are eligible to apply, want to check in with us about your project idea, or are having trouble with the application, please carefully review the grant guidelines and this FAQ, then reach out to Maine Humanities Council grants staff with remaining questions. **We are happy to talk with you no matter where you are in the process!**

Email your questions to anyone on our Grants Team:
Lizz Sinclair
Kyle Volland
Samaa Abdurraqib

Please be sure to include your phone number in case we need to call you, and allow us a business day to respond.