Arts & Humanities Grant FAQs

1. What kinds of projects are you excited to fund?

We are excited to support innovative, Maine-based community projects with rich and well-developed arts and humanities components, strong participation from artists/topic experts, robust support from partners in the community, and broad public outreach, especially to new audiences.

2. Projects must have *both* Arts *and* Humanities content.

Humanities content…what's that?

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

One of the hallmarks of 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 address 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?

A topic expert is someone with deep expertise in the topic you're working on. They can serve as a sounding board and resource, help you make sure your project is addressing the most interesting and important elements of the topic, and help frame it in a way that really draws participants into thinking about it and using it to reflect on their experience.

Deep expertise might include:

- having extensive professional and/or life experience on the subject (this could include artists, for example);

- 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;
- an advanced degree in an appropriate field, such as a university professor or graduate student.

We like to see artists, culture bearers, and other content experts compensated for their work.

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

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

MHC wants the arts and humanities to thrive in communities across the state– 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 that are free. If a fee is charged, participation costs should be reasonable for the type of programming being presented.

6. 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 this grant. In-kind contributions may include time and materials, office space and equipment, travel, donated services, and other non-cash donations. It is important for us to be able to show that our grant funds leverage additional resources, so please include ALL match, even when it is more than 50%.

7. **What kind of projects are ineligible?**

This grant cannot 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.**
- **Projects that do not include *both* the arts and humanities.**

8. Who is eligible to apply?

Organizations with 501c3 status, government organizations (such as federally recognized 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 (see above) you will need a **FISCAL SPONSOR** for your project. The National Council of Nonprofits has a helpful resource sheet on fiscal sponsorship. **For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply through a fiscal sponsor.**

9. Who is NOT eligible to apply?

- For-profit organizations and political or advocacy organizations.
- Anyone who currently has an overdue final report for a previous MHC grant or has an open MHC project grant (Major, Mini, or Arts & Humanities).
- Beginning in 2025, if you or your organization received an MHC project grant (Major, Mini, or Arts & Humanities), you are not eligible to apply again in either the same or the following calendar year. For example, an organization awarded a project grant (at any point) in 2025 would not be eligible to apply for ANY MHC grants until January 2027.

How do I apply?

Applications are submitted through our online form.

- You can preview the application 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 any page. When you do, you will see a pop-up message with a unique link to use when you (or a colleague) want to resume work. You have the option to have the link emailed to you. **Save this link, as this is the only way to access your saved application. We are not able to see applications until after 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 NEW link to use to access your application.**
- To make it easier to draft responses to copy-and-paste into the application, a word version of the project narrative questions is available to download from our website.

If you have any questions about the form, contact Kyle Volland: kyle@mainehumanities.org

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

Yes! Email the grants staff at MHC. We can counsel you through the entire process! Our emails are below.

12. I've applied for grants before…should I still talk to you before applying?

We strongly recommend it. Past applicants have found it very useful to check in with us about their ideas 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 I contact if I still have questions?

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

Email your questions to any of us:

Kyle Volland: kyle@mainehumanities.org
Lizz Sinclair: lizz@mainehumanities.org
Samaa Abdurraqib: samaa@mainehumantiies.org

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