

Mississippi Bicentennial Grant Program Guidelines

Mississippi Humanities Council & Visit Mississippi

If you have trouble accessing this application online, please contact the Mississippi Humanities Council, 601.432.6752 or grants@mhc.state.ms.us

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1. About the Bicentennial Grants Program

As Mississippi marks 200 years of statehood in 2017, we encourage communities across the state to reflect upon and celebrate our shared history and culture, while envisioning the future of Mississippi. The bicentennial offers a unique opportunity to foster appreciation among Mississippians for our state's remarkable story and to educate people of all ages about the founding, growth, and evolution of America's 20th state. Our hope is to inspire and empower local organizations throughout Mississippi to develop public programs that document, interpret, and explore community culture throughout the state, while celebrating the resilience and creativity that continues to shape Mississippi today.

This grant program will make public funds available for bicentennial commemorations, projects and celebrations throughout Mississippi. The Mississippi Humanities Council, which has more than 40 years of experience in administering a public humanities grant program, will oversee this initiative. The grant is made possible through the Mississippi Legislature in partnership with the Mississippi Development Authority/Visit Mississippi.

These bicentennial grants will support a wide array of public programs. All programs must be free and open to the public and relate to some aspect of Mississippi history, contemporary culture, and the celebration of the state's bicentennial, including but not limited to People & Story; History & Culture; Music & Food; Industry & Entrepreneurship; and Outdoors & Recreation.

The goal of the Mississippi Bicentennial Grants Program is to empower Mississippians to explore the unique history and character of our state. Programs, which must take place

during 2017, should bring together communities, foster discussion, celebrate statehood, and forge relationships between individuals, organizations, and regions.

Examples of eligible projects include: speaker series on Mississippi history/culture; local oral history projects; social media meet-ups of bicentennial nature; creation of podcasts or websites on Mississippi history/culture/foodways/architecture; conference/symposium about an aspect of bicentennial history; historical reenactments; creation of digital projects on Mississippi; writing and publication of county history; events exploring contemporary community life, culture and the creative economy; discussion programs about the future of Mississippi; exhibits on some aspect of Mississippi history or culture; creation of films or websites presenting local history or culture; events (not festivals) celebrating the cultural and artistic legacy of Mississippi. Programs should be educational in nature, though a small portion of the budget may be used for entertainment, food, and beverage.

2. Grant Amounts & Deadlines

Grants of up to \$10,000 will be offered to support bicentennial-related programming. The amount requested should be reasonable for the scope of the project. Individual grants may support a series of different events. Applications will be accepted on a monthly basis until all grant funds are expended. Grant deadlines are: December 1, January 3, February 1, March 1, April 3, May 1, June 1, July 3, August 1, Sept. 1, October 2, and November 1.

Proposals must be delivered, in either hard copy or email form, to the MHC office by 5:00 p.m. on deadline days. Programs and expenditures may not occur fewer than six weeks after the deadline date you selected. Early submissions are not processed until the official deadline for that month.

Funding by MHC in any given round depends on the quality of proposals, on the funds available, and on the number of proposals received. MHC attempts to allocate funds equitably across the state's counties and regions to serve as many Mississippians as possible.

3. Are You Eligible for a Grant?

Mississippi Bicentennial grants are intended to serve Mississippians and must be free and open to the public. Organizations or groups that apply must be Mississippi-based and constituted for nonprofit purposes. It is not necessary that such organizations or groups be incorporated or have tax-exempt status. MHC does not award grants to for-profit entities. All grant applicants must have a [DUNS number](#). Typical organizations eligible for grants include:

- Private nonprofit organizations

- Local or statewide historical societies
- Institutions of higher education
- State, local and federally recognized Indian tribal governments
- Community and cultural organizations
- Educational and professional groups
- Museums
- Libraries
- Public agencies & municipalities
- Non-commercial radio and television stations
- Convention & Visitors Bureaus

Bicentennial grants may not be used to support:

- programs that have an admission fee or registration charge
- projects primarily intended to promote an organization or its programs
- salaries of employees associated with the applying organization or other overhead costs
- construction, preservation or renovation of facilities or purchase of equipment
- acquisitions or additions to collections
- alcoholic beverages
- travel to professional meetings
- individual research projects unless they are directly supporting a public program
- projects that advocate or promote a particular political, ideological, religious or partisan point of view

Individuals and for-profit groups are not eligible to apply for Bicentennial grants.

While nonprofit organizations may collaborate informally to share grant funds, the name of only one organization may appear on the application. A staff member from that organization will be the lead organizer or project director.

4. How to Apply

Step One: Discuss your project with MHC staff.

To make the best use of your time, the staff of the Mississippi Humanities Council will help you determine whether your project is eligible for our grant program before you apply. Via email or phone, applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the Executive Director or the Assistant Director several weeks before the grant deadline you select to discuss your project. Staff will give you guidance on how to craft a successful application and answer any questions you have.

Step Two: Submit a rough draft of your grant application

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a draft of their grant application, including proposed budget, at least two weeks prior to the deadline. MHC staff will offer constructive feedback and suggestions on how to strengthen the application. Grant application drafts should be sent via email to grants@mhc.state.ms.us.

Step Three: Submit your written application.

We prefer that you submit your grant application as a single PDF file by email to grants@mhc.state.ms.us. If this is not possible for you, you may [print the application](#) and mail the completed forms to our office by the deadline. All applications must be received by the deadline to be considered.

Application forms are available for download here:

[\[add link to bicentennial grant form\]](#)

All applications must include a project narrative that includes the following information:

- A description of the program and its goals, as well as plans for publicity and evaluation.
- Applicant's previous experience with similar programs.
- An explanation of how the proposed project relates to the state bicentennial and how it will benefit the applicant's community.
- Outline of the format and schedule of events for each program in the project, including the names of scholars or performers involved, their topics, and the date and location of any public programs.
- For oral history projects, an explanation of how the interviews will be used.

Applications must also include a completed and signed grant application checklist; resume sheets for each program participant paid with grant funds; and a detailed budget narrative explaining how grants funds will be spent.

Step Four: What happens next?

All completed grant applications will be reviewed by the Bicentennial Grants Committee, which consists of representatives from the MHC, the Mississippi Bicentennial Commission, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and the Mississippi Development Authority. You will receive notification by email of the committee's funding decisions within four weeks of your application deadline. If MHC funds your grant request, you will receive an award letter and a packet detailing your next steps. If MHC does not fund your request, you will receive a letter explaining our decision.

5. Keys to a Successful Proposal

Partner with other local organizations

MHC strongly encourages collaboration between local organizations to reach as broad an audience as possible. Though only one organization should be the applying entity for the grant, we encourage you to establish a broad-based local planning committee.

Potential audience members are involved in the planning

People who represent the potential audience should participate in designing the grant project, through planning, execution of the project and follow-up evaluation. Projects that cover topics related to specific groups—such as ethnic minorities, senior citizens or women—should specifically include representatives from those groups on the project committee.

Grant projects should be accessible to all segments of the population and no one should be excluded because of race, sex, age, or disability. For instance, the location selected for a program should be accessible to all persons who might wish to attend. Grant recipients/project directors are expected to make all reasonable efforts to make programs accessible to citizens with disabilities. If you have questions regarding accessibility, please contact the Mississippi Humanities Council.

Have an adequate evaluation plan

Evaluation of the success of a project is an essential part of good programming. Understanding the response of a program's audience is crucial to planning future programs. Grant applicants must describe their evaluation plan in their project narrative. Evaluation forms distributed to audience members should solicit demographic information in addition to qualitative responses to the program. Awarded grantees will receive a sample audience evaluation form that may be adapted to your particular program. The project director's final grant report must contain an assessment of the success of the program based on audience evaluation.

Have a strong publicity plan

Publicity is a critical part of every successful project. An appropriate and effective plan for promoting the program must be described in the grant narrative. The first step in successfully publicizing a program is carefully defining its purpose and intended audience. Submit your application well in advance of your program date to allow adequate time for publicity.

Attractive, striking and informative publicity well in advance of your programs will encourage people to attend. We strongly encourage you to send press releases, announcements and invitations to newspapers and radio and television stations, as well as using various forms of social media to publicize the event. In addition, we encourage you to send promotional materials about the program to Mississippi's Congressional delegation, local legislators, and statewide elected officials. We encourage you to

cooperate with other local groups and organizations to help publicize your program or project.

All funded programs will be branded as official Mississippi Bicentennial Celebration events. Grantees will be required to use the official bicentennial logo and acknowledge MHC and Visit Mississippi as funders of the program. The MHC and bicentennial logos are available for download [here](#).

6. Budget Tips and Terms

Your budget should be an accurate and complete estimate of the financial resources needed to carry out your proposed project. You may identify three sources of support:

- Bicentennial grant funds
- Cost-sharing provided by the sponsoring organization (in cash or in kind)
- Cash contributions from third parties

The total budget is the sum of all the resources available from these three categories. The application form provides space to summarize both income and expenditures for the project. Supplement this summary with a budget narrative showing that your costs are reasonable and directly related to the project activities you propose.

Expenditures

The budgeted expenditures for the project must be made between the beginning and ending dates of the proposed project period. When projects require more than the requested grant amount, explain how you will find additional funds to complete the project. (See explanation under [Cost-Sharing](#).)

Fiscal Agent

The applicant shall designate a fiscal agent, who will assume responsibility for authorizing expenses and making disbursements of funds according to the provisions of the approved budget for the project. **The project director may not act as financial officer.**

The fiscal agent must agree to follow the fiscal policies of the Mississippi Humanities Council. He or she will agree to maintain financial records and make them available for audit for up to three years from the end of the project date. When the applicant institution is a college or university, the fiscal agent must be selected by the school's accounting office or other office responsible for grants management.

Personnel

Most applicants accumulate cost-sharing through the contributed time of project staff, especially the project director and volunteers. Scholars and other project participants are

paid honoraria; however, large honoraria for speakers, panelists and consultants are discouraged. Applicants can consult MHC staff to discuss reasonable honoraria. The Council will not pay honoraria for employees of the applicants' organization.

Travel

Travel plans should be itemized by number of trips, points of origin and destination, means of transportation and length of stay. MHC will contribute the state rate of 54 cents per mile toward transportation costs for privately owned automobiles or the actual cost of domestic coach class airfare, train, bus or other public transportation with receipts. Actual cost of meals and lodging can be reimbursed with receipts.

7. Cost Share

Each organization applying for a grant must provide for the project's [cost-sharing](#) contributions in cash and/or in kind. The combined total of cash and [in-kind contributions](#) must at least equal the amount of MHC funds. Applicants are encouraged to be comprehensive in their in-kind calculations, which may exceed the amount of grant funds requested.

NOTE: Many organizations meet the cost-sharing requirement through donated goods and services, such as the estimated value of volunteers' time, meeting space provided free of charge or donated materials. Most applicants accumulate cost-sharing through the contributed time of project staff, especially the project director and volunteers. MHC staff is available to help you determine your cost-sharing contributions.

MHC recognizes that all cost-sharing or matching funds may not be in hand at the time of application. However, you must describe how you expect to meet the matching requirements.

All grants up to \$5000 may be matched in-kind, in cash, or combination of the two. All grants over \$5000 must be matched by at least 25% cash. Thus, a \$10,000 grant must be matched by at least \$2500 cash.

8. Definition of Terms

Authorizing Official

A person with authority to legally obligate an organization to the grant agreement.

Cost Share

The value of the cash or in-kind contribution to the project by the grantee or parties other than the Mississippi Humanities Council.

DUNS Number

A unique nine-digit identification number for each physical location of a business. D-U-N-S Number assignment is free for all businesses required to register with the federal government for contracts or grants. The DUNS system enables the government to better track the spending of federal funds.

Fiscal Agent

Person who will manage fiscal matters related to the grant.

Grant Period

The period in which the granted project takes place. Grant applicants determine the length of the grant period, which should include sufficient time after the project to complete and submit all final reports. Grant periods should not begin less than six weeks after the grant deadline. **No grant funds may be spent or obligated before the start of the grant period.**

Honoraria

The stipends or fees paid to project participants for their professional services.

In-Kind Contributions

Services, facilities, publicity, volunteer time or other non-cash contributions in support of a project. Estimate the dollar value of in-kind contributions based on what these services would normally cost.

Project Director

The individual responsible for managing all aspects of a project, including its planning, promotion, conduct and evaluation.

If you have any questions, please contact MHC for assistance at (601) 432-6752.

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Email: grants@mhc.state.ms.us – MHC Homepage: <http://www.mshumanities.org>