

Mississippi Humanities Council Documentary Film Grant Application Guidelines

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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 Mississippi Humanities Council

The Mississippi Humanities Council is an independent nonprofit organization affiliated with the National Endowment for the Humanities. Established in 1972 on the premise that the humanities are relevant to any enterprise involving serious thought, discussion and decision-making, the Council has worked to foster the public's understanding of historical, literary and philosophical perspectives on the human experience. The Council is committed to making its programs accessible to as many Mississippians as possible and expects grant recipients to do the same.

What are the humanities?

The humanities enrich our understanding of the human experience in the past, present and future. The humanities disciplines, as defined by Congress, include:

- literature, classics, languages and linguistics
- history and archaeology
- philosophy, jurisprudence, ethics and comparative religion
- history, criticism and theory of the arts
- social sciences employing historical or philosophical approaches

Through language, literature and the arts, human beings express their knowledge about their cultural heritage and reflect on its meaning. The contributions of humanities experts, writers and researchers in such fields as philosophy, ethics and jurisprudence enrich the civic dialogue in a democratic society. Insights about the past from archaeology and history enable us to interpret the present and plan for a better future.

Mississippi Humanities Council documentary film grants are designed to strengthen the humanities content and approach of documentary productions. The Mississippi Humanities Council encourages applicants to make use of relevant humanities expertise in planning and implementing projects and to approach subject matter from a perspective informed by the humanities—e.g., make use of existing or new scholarship and research on the topic for context and perspective; ask informed, critical questions; and seek to foster insight, reflection and thoughtful analysis on the part of the audience. A humanities advisor (academic scholar, humanities professional or culture bearer) with expertise relevant to the film subject must serve as an advisor to the project.

2. Who can apply for Mississippi Humanities Council documentary film grants?

Organizations or groups that apply for grants from MHC must be 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. As per federal rules, grant applicants must obtain a free Unique Entity ID (UEI) as the primary means of identification required to receive federal funding. Organizations seeking MHC funds are REQUIRED to provide the Unique Entity ID (UEI) for grant applications. Typical organizations eligible for grants include:

- Private nonprofit organizations
- Institutions of higher education
- State, local and federally recognized Indian tribal governments
- Community and cultural organizations
- Educational and professional groups
- Museums
- Libraries
- Public agencies
- Non-commercial radio and television stations

Individuals and for-profit groups are not eligible to apply for MHC grants. For documentary films, you may use a sponsoring fiscal organization. The sponsoring fiscal organization must be substantially involved with the project. If you make use of a fiscal agent/sponsor, explain in your application narrative how this project fits with the goals and usual activities of the sponsoring organization. Describe how the sponsoring organization will make a substantive contribution to the project. Providing only bookkeeping and related services does not constitute a substantive contribution.

3. Is your media project eligible for a Mississippi Humanities Council grant?

- Does your project make use of Mississippi’s history and culture?
- Will the project engage audiences by inspiring reflection and thoughtful analysis?
- Does your project involve a humanities expert who will work in concert with producers and directors?

4. How much can I request?

Up to \$15,000.

All media grants require a 1:1 cost-share match. Grants up to \$5,000 may be matched in cash, in-kind or both. Grants between \$5,001 and \$10,000 require at least 50% cash match. Grants between \$10,001 and \$15,000 require 100% cash cost-share.

5. What to Include in Your Description of Proposed Film Project (be sure in your application you address the following questions):

A. What do you plan to do?

- Synopsis of the project, including anticipated length and format. Focus on the activities that will be supported by Mississippi Humanities Council funds.
- Provide a timeline. Please note: project activities for which you seek Mississippi Humanities Council funding cannot occur prior to funding notification and the maximum term of this grant is two years. Please provide the timeline in this sample format:

TIME PERIOD	ACTIVITY
April-July 2023	Research and consult with humanities advisors
August 2023	Plan, schedule, and conduct first round of preliminary interviews
October 2023	Develop shooting script for fundraising trailer
	Etc.

- For projects in pre-production: What is your research plan? What sources do you plan to consult when developing the project?
- For projects in post-production: What sources did you consult for this project?
- Required Sample Work and Explanation of Selection.
 - Required sample materials to submit: Internet link and password, if applicable, to a prior work sample in its entirety.
 - Explain the selection of prior work and briefly outline what role(s) the Project Director played in its creation.
 - Is this your first documentary film project? If so, what skills and experience do you bring to the project?

- B. For the primary project personnel (e.g., project director, director, production designer or producer) include a half-page bio. Bios should include relevant skills and education, credits for digital projects, major broadcasts, or exhibitions, and award information.
- C. Who is the intended audience, and what is the plan for outreach, publicity and engagement? In what ways will you engage your media project with the public, whether you are just beginning your project or are near completion? Please describe plans for broadcast distribution, exhibition, educational materials or social media outreach. If you plan to use social media, please identify the tools you plan to use (Facebook, Twitter, email, etc.) and why those tools are used.
- D. What are the goals and outcomes of the project and how will it be evaluated? How will this project benefit the community you are trying to reach?
- E. What is your fundraising strategy? Because media projects typically require funding at levels greater than the Mississippi Humanities Council can support, applicants are encouraged to seek multiple sources of support. Include a list of all sources of funds raised to date for this project. List all sources of other funding requests; indicate the status of those requests and date of notification.

6. Eligible grant expenditures may include:

- Honoraria for humanities scholars and advisors;
- Salaries or fees for production staff and technical consultants;
- Rights to use archival materials;
- Supplies and materials for production activities;
- Lesson plan development for use in schools;
- Rental (unless purchase cost is less) of equipment or software;
- Travel, lodging and per diem expenses for staff, consultants and advisors—travel plans should be itemized by number of trips, points of origin and destination, means of transportation and length of stay; mileage expenses for privately owned automobiles will be reimbursed at the prevailing government rate of the state of Mississippi; the actual cost of domestic coach class airfare, train, bus or other public transportation; cost of meals and lodging;
- Administrative costs directly related to the project, or fiscal agent fees (the Mississippi Humanities Council recommends these costs do not exceed 15% of total Mississippi Humanities Council grant request);
- Public program expenses (e.g., room rental for premiere);
- Publicity expenses directly related to the project.

7. Review Criteria for Documentary Film Proposals:

- Conceptual clarity, style, and approach

- Significance and scope of subject matter
- Experience of production team and advisors
- Strength of media samples or portfolios
- Likelihood of completion and distribution
- Feasibility of work plan and outreach
- Budget and fundraising plans
- Does the project approach the subject from a humanities perspective, using scholarship and research and incorporating a variety of viewpoints?
- Distribution plans
- How will you facilitate public engagement with and dialogue around your film?

All applicants for a documentary film grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council *must* consult with MHC staff prior to grant submission. If MHC staff determines the applicant could benefit from further consultation with film/media specialists (at no cost to the applicant) before completing a proposal, staff will arrange an advisory Zoom session.

8. How to Apply

Step One: Discuss your project with MHC staff.

To make the best use of your time, MHC will help you determine whether your project is eligible for our grant program before you apply. Via email or phone, applicants must contact the Executive Director or the Assistant Director a minimum of two 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 one week prior to the deadline. MHC staff will offer constructive feedback and suggestions on how to strengthen the application. To submit a draft, click the “save and resume” button at the bottom of the page in the online grant portal. You will then be sent a link to the application via email. Forward that link to grants@mhc.state.ms.us. MHC staff will then be able to review your draft application.

Step Three: Submit your written application.

All grant applications should be submitted via our online portal. If this is not possible for you, contact MHC staff. All applications must be received by the deadline to be considered.

Step Four: What happens next?

You will receive notification by email of funding decisions within 10 weeks of the application deadline for a regular grant. Please note we do not process early submissions until the official deadline for that funding cycle.

If MHC funds your grant request, you will receive an award letter and a packet detailing your next steps via email. If MHC does not fund your request, you will receive a letter explaining our decision.

9. Keys to a Successful Proposal

Humanities experts actively involved

Humanities experts should participate in all phases of the planning, conduct and evaluation of project activities.

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.

Program reflects balance of views

Proposals that address public policy questions and controversial issues should provide a balance of viewpoints, avoiding advocacy or bias. Humanities experts with expertise in a range of viewpoints should be involved in the planning and implementation phases of program development.

Have an adequate evaluation plan

Evaluation of the success of a project is an essential part of good programming. The project director's final grant report must contain an assessment of the success of the project.

10. 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:

- Mississippi Humanities Council 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 as well as a space to detail projected costs.

Expenditures

The budgeted expenditures for the project must be made between the beginning and ending dates of the proposed project period.

Fiscal Officer

The applicant shall designate a fiscal officer, 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 officer must agree to follow the fiscal policies of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Mississippi Humanities Council. They 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 officer must be selected by the school's accounting office or other office responsible for grants management.

Indirect Costs

Per federal rule 2 CFR §200.414 (f), the Mississippi Humanities Council will honor any federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) for grants made with federal funds. Any nonfederal entity that has never received a federal NICRA may charge a de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct costs. For grants made with state funds, including oral history grants, indirect costs may not be charged.

Facilities

An MHC grant cannot pay the applicant institution to rent its own meeting spaces or equipment. The cost or value of such rental may be counted toward the cost-share.

Travel

Travel plans should be itemized by number of trips, points of origin and destination, means of transportation and length of stay. Mileage expenses for privately owned automobiles will be reimbursed at the prevailing government rate of the state of Mississippi or the actual cost of domestic coach class airfare, train, bus or other public transportation with receipts. Actual cost of meals and lodging may be reimbursed with receipts.

11. 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.

UEI Number

Organizations seeking MHC funds are REQUIRED to provide the Unique Entity ID (UEI). Organizations can receive their free UEI on the SAM.gov website.

EIN Number

The Employer Identification Number (EIN), also known as the Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) or the Federal Tax Identification Number, is a unique nine-digit number assigned by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to business entities operating in the United States for the purposes of identification. Organizations without paid employees often don't have an EIN number. Grantees are not required to have an EIN number.

Fiscal Officer

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 10 weeks after the grant deadline. No grant funds may be spent or obligated before the start of the grant period or after the grant period ends.

Honoraria

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

Humanities Disciplines

See "What are the Humanities?"

Humanities Advisors/Professionals

Humanities advisors/professionals include the following:

- Any person teaching in a humanities discipline at an accredited institution of higher learning in this state or who is retired or on leave from such a position.
- A person professionally educated in a traditional liberal arts field, holding the M.A. or Ph.D. degree in such a field, who has taught, written or done research in that field.

In some cases, individuals will be considered humanities experts by virtue of life experiences, expertise, or achievements, such as publications, in one of the fields of the humanities. Please consult with MHC regarding special cases.

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.

Project Personnel

Persons involved in any phase of the proposed project (e.g., project director, director, production designer or producer) funded by a Mississippi Humanities Council grant.

Sponsoring Fiscal Organization

Subawards to a fiscal sponsor who is substantially involved with the project are permissible, however the Council may not make subawards to individual filmmakers. If a subaward makes use of a fiscal agent/sponsor, identify how the sponsoring organization will make a substantive contribution to the project. Providing only bookkeeping and related services does not constitute a substantive contribution.

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

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