REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
Youth Literary (FY27)

July 30, 2026

Overview

The Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC), a non-profit organization, strives to create a more just society that is curious, connected, and compassionate by increasing the collective understanding of ourselves, our communities, and our histories through stories and experiences.

In 2008, Minnesota's voters passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment (Legacy Amendment) to the Minnesota Constitution to: protect drinking water sources; to protect, enhance, and restore wetlands, prairies, forests, fish, game, and wildlife habitat; to preserve arts and cultural heritage; to support parks and trails; and to protect, enhance, and restore lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater.

The Legacy Amendment increases the state sales tax by three-eighths of one percent, beginning on July 1, 2009, continuing until 2034, and creates four funds. The additional sales tax revenue is distributed into the four funds as follows: 33 percent to the clean water fund; 33 percent to the outdoor heritage fund; 19.75 percent to the arts and cultural heritage fund; and 14.25 percent to the parks and trails fund.

Individuals and organizations that receive funding from the arts and culture heritage fund are generally expected to:

- Amplify arts, culture, and heritage in Minnesota,
- Increase the depth and breadth of Minnesota who will connect with arts, culture, and heritage, and
- Provide opportunities for individuals in Minnesota to enjoy arts and culture for free or at reduced cost to allow access for economically disadvantaged individuals and families in Minnesota to attend Legacy programs.

Minnesota Legislation

During the Minnesota Legislative session that ended in 2025, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated $500,000 to the Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC) from the Legacy Fund to administer Youth Literary grants. These grants will be awarded to individual authors and organizations, creating and producing books for youth.

The Legislation further identifies that grant funding must be used for the creation and distribution of books for youth that celebrate cultural expression with a focus on excellent creative work and an educational value.

Funding Availability

MHC will award $500,000 (less allowable administrative fee) in Youth Literary grants.

Funding for this grant line will be available for the following grant period: October 1, 2026, to May 31, 2027.

Applicants may request up to $50,000 during the grant period.

Legacy funding may only be used for new work or new additions to existing work. Funding must supplement and not substitute existing funding sources or be used as reimbursement of expenses for existing projects.

Timeline

RFP posted	Thursday, July 30, 2026
Information Session #1 (Virtual)	Tuesday, August 11, 2026
Information Session #2 (Virtual)	Wednesday, August 12, 2026
Deadline to request MHC application feedback	Friday, September 4, 2026
Applications due no later than 6:00 p.m. CDT	Friday, September 11, 2026
Applications under review	Monday, September 14, 2026
Funding available following execution of the grant agreement	
Project End Date	May 31, 2027
Final Reporting Due	June 30, 2027

Eligibility

An applicant is eligible to apply for funding:

- If the applicant is in good standing with the IRS,
- If the applicant is in good standing with MHC, and
- If the applicant is working to:
  - to create and distribute books for youth in Minnesota, that celebrate cultural expression with a focus on creative work and education value.

MHC uses the [IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search] to confirm compliance. If you are unsure whether you are in good standing with MHC, please contact Grants Administrator Elizabeth Neary at lizzie@mnhum.org. MHC may grant an exemption to an organization that is not in good standing if the applicant uses a fiscal agent.

Additional financial information may be requested based on review an assessment of applications submitted. An applicant is eligible to receive grant funding if they are in good standing with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and MHC. An organization is in good standing with the IRS when they have completed all IRS reporting requirements and can receive tax-deductible charitable contributions.

An applicant is in good standing with MHC unless they have a history of untimely or inaccurate financial or program reports or an open grant beyond its closure date. If you are unsure whether you are in good standing with MHC, please contact us at grants@mnhum.org. MHC may grant an eligibility exemption to an organization if the applicant uses a fiscal agent.

Additional financial information may be requested based on review and assessment of application submitted.

MHC reserves the right to request additional financial information from an applicant.

Technical Assistance

If you have any questions about this RFP, please email MHC's Grants Administrators at grants@mnhum.org

All applicants are strongly encouraged to contact MHC in advance of submitting a full proposal. MHC will discuss proposals, help align ideas with funding criteria, outline project and grant payment timelines, and review budgets for allowable expenses. MHC is available and committed to helping applicants submit the strongest application possible. We will attempt to respond to your question within 48 hours by phone or email.

Zoom links for the public information sessions can be found on MHC's website.

If applying in English is a barrier or you need a reasonable accommodation to submit your application, please contact grants@mnhum.org. If you have any questions about this RFP, please email MHC's Grants Administrators at grants@mnhum.org

All applicants are strongly encouraged to contact MHC in advance of submitting a full proposal. MHC will discuss proposals, help align ideas with funding criteria, outline project and grant payment timelines, and review budgets for allowable expenses. MHC is available and committed to helping applicants submit the strongest application possible. We will attempt to respond to your question within 48 hours by phone or email.

MHC will host a series of public information sessions for anyone interested in applying. Information will include details about criteria, eligibility, tips for successful applications, and how to apply online:

Virtual	August 11, 2026	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Virtual	August 12, 2026	11:00 am – 12:00 pm

If applying in English is a barrier or you need a reasonable accommodation to submit your application, please contact grants@mnhum.org.

Application

Applicants are encouraged to apply online through MHC's grants management system. We recommend reviewing the full application prior to logging on and setting up an account. You may save your initial application entries and subsequently return to the document to finish your application. Also, while an applicant may submit multiple proposals, an applicant may only be awarded one grant.

You may request any amount of funding up to $50,000.

If you request funding in the amount of $50,000 or more, you need to submit the following financial documentation with your application:

- If your annual revenue was $750,000 or more last year, please submit your most recent certified financial audit (must be 2024 or forward).
- If your annual revenue was at least $50,000 but less than $750,000, please submit your most recent IRS Form 990 (must be 2024 or forward).
- If your annual revenue was no more than $49,999, please submit the last financial statement (for example, income statement and balance statement) approved by your board.

Failure to submit the above financial information as requested may result in your application not being reviewed.

All applications must be received no later than 6:00 p.m. CDT, on **Friday, September 11, 2026.**

Please do not submit any additional materials other than what is requested, such as binders or photos, in the application. Unrequested materials will not be reviewed.

Financial Information

Legacy Funding Limitations

Legacy prohibits funds from being used to:

- Cover costs incurred before the grant agreement is fully signed,
- Start, match, add, or complete any type of capital campaign,
- Support capital costs (such as improvements, construction, property, or equipment),
- Support benefits and fundraisers,
- Purchase promotional giveaway items such as t-shirts, keychains,
- Fund out-of-state expenses, such as out-of-state travel and lodging and contractor expenses,
- Pay for indirect costs or overhead charges not directly related to the activities outlined in the project proposal,
- Food expenses when expenses are either (i) incurred during the planning phase of the project, or (ii) are not essential to the final program,
- Wages, salary, and benefits of staff for the time that such individuals are not working on the project, and
- Cash payments.

Grant Payments

Applicants will be asked in their application to identify whether they wish to receive funding through Reimbursement or Advance. An applicant awarded a grant is referred to as Grantee. Under Reimbursement, the grantee receives reimbursement after incurring the expenses and submitting documentation to MHC that the expenses have been incurred. Under Advance, the grantee receives funding prior to incurring expenses. Advances are available on the following schedule:

- If the grant is $10,000 or less, the maximum available advance is 75%
- If the grant is at least $10,000 and less than $49,999, the maximum available advance is 50%
- If the grant is $50,000 or more, the maximum available advance is 25%

Factors such as history of late reports, prior poor performance, and financial risk will be considered in determining Advance eligibility.

MHC is required to hold ten (10%) percent of a grantee's award until all reporting requirements have been met. Grant funds are not available until the grant Agreement has been signed by MHC and the grantee.

If Advance has been requested, the first Advance payment will be made within 25 business days of MHC receiving a W9 and/or ACH form. No payments will be made if the grantee has a past due progress report.

Selection Process

All eligible applications will be evaluated on a 100–point scale using the following scoring factors and weight criteria:

Project Details (30)

- How well does the project (select as many as applicable but at least one of the following):
    - Amplify arts, culture, and heritage in Minnesota,
    - Increase the depth and breadth of Minnesota who will connect with arts, culture, and heritage, and
    - Provide opportunities for individuals in Minnesota to enjoy arts and culture for free or at reduced cost to allow access for economically disadvantaged individuals and families in Minnesota to attend Legacy programs.
- Is the primary purpose of the project to create, produce, and/or distribute books for youth that celebrate cultural expression?
- Why would you consider your project to be an example of excellent creative work?
- How does the proposed book amplify Minnesota cultural history or the experiences of Minnesota cultural communities?
- What educational value is the project bringing to Minnesota youth?
- What youth audience are you attempting to serve? Be specific with grade or age level, subject matter, number of youth, educators, and/or number of schools.
- How engaging, well-developed, and appropriate is the proposed book concept for the intended youth audience?

Applicant Experience & Community Connection (25)

- What relevant experience does the applicant have in writing, developing, or producing books and/or youth-focused content?
- How does the applicant demonstrate the ability to successfully complete the proposed project?
- How is the project informed by or connected to the community or cultural context it represents?
- If applicable, how will community members, educators, or cultural experts inform or support the project?
- If applicable, does the applicant demonstrate experience engaging with relevant communities or audiences?

Project Management (25)

- Is the project plan clear and feasible within the proposed timeline?
- How well does the applicant demonstrate the ability to correctly and consistently track and report expenses and hours?
- Are the project goals clear, and is there a realistic plan to achieve them?
- Does the budget submitted align with the proposed project?
- Are the itemized expenses detailed, clear and consistent with Legacy?
- If applicable, how will compliance with Minnesota competitive bid laws be ensured?

Evaluation & Impact (20)

- Is the intended impact of the project clear?
- How will the applicant measure project outcomes and success?
- Are the evaluation methods appropriate and feasible?
- How will the project meaningfully impact its audience?
- What steps is the applicant taking to maximize your desired impact?

Monitoring Expectations

Monitoring

MHC will monitor your activities throughout the course of the grant period. During the project or upon completion of the project, you will be asked to provide and should be prepared to produce information concerning:

- Details of program income and expenses to date compared to the original budget,
- Details of how you evaluated success, what information you measured, and whether you believe you achieved success,
- Timesheets, payroll allocations, and paycheck stubs for personnel expenses,
- Details regarding the number of counties served,
- Full-Time Employment results,
- A list of board members or directors (as applicable),
- Identify non-MHC funds you were able to secure for the project and how the funds were used,
- Details regarding the direct and administrative expenses for the project,
- Fiscal Agent contact information (as applicable), and
- An invoice for any payment requested.

Site Visit

If you receive a grant award of $50,000 of more, MHC consistent with Minnesota law will schedule and conduct at least one on–site visit during the grant period.

Using Third Parties

If you use grant funds awarded to hire or retain a third party not originally identified in your grant application, you must use the following processes:

- Between $25,000 and $99,999, must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids.
- Between $10,000 and $24,999, must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or awarded to a targeted vendor.

You must take all possible steps to ensure that targeted vendors certified from the following entities are given an opportunity to bid:

- State Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List
- Metropolitan Council's Targeted Vendor list: Minnesota Unified Certification Program
- Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: Central Certification Program

You must not contract with any entity that is suspended or debarred in Minnesota. Suspended/Debarred Vendor Information

You must have a written process for awarding and administering contracts. If you proceed with a single source bid, you must maintain proper documentation justifying your decision. Your process must also address how you will address conflicts of interest.

Non-Discrimination and State Contract Compliance

Minnesota law requires all grantees to agree not to discriminate in violation of the Minnesota Human Rights Act and to abide by Minnesota law that requires ensuring equal opportunity within contracting.

Interim Written Report

Depending on the amount of award, you may be required to prepare an Interim Written Report for MHC to demonstrate adequate progress in fulfilling the terms of your award. The terms of your Interim Report will be, if applicable, stated within your grant agreement with MHC.

Final Report

At the end of the reporting period, identified within your Grant Agreement, you will be required to submit a final report to MHC. MHC will also engage in a final reconciliation of your expenses under the terms of the Grant Agreement. Your last payment under the terms of the Grant Agreement, ten (10) percent of your grant, will be sent once reconciliation has been completed and your final report has been reviewed by MHC.

Minnesota Humanities Center

Document Retention

Minnesota law requires all grantees to maintain their books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices relevant to their grant for examination by the Minnesota Legislative auditor or Minnesota state auditor for a minimum of six (6) years from the grant agreement end date or the state retention requirements, whichever is later.