Minnesota Humanities Center

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
Community Identity and Heritage: Cultural Heritage (Year 2)

September 3, 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
- Provided 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 $4,868,000 to MHC from the Legacy Fund for design, award, and monitoring of the grant program, to administer Community Identity & Heritage, Cultural Heritage Grants, to individuals and organizations, in Minnesota.

The Legislature in providing this funding is seeking to fund individuals and organizations that will work to create, celebrate, and teach the art, culture, and heritage of the many diverse cultural groups that make up Minnesota, including but not limited to Indigenous organizations, communities whose culture and heritage have been historically underrepresented, recent immigrant communities, and veterans.

The Minnesota Legislature identified the following within the legislation to be given priority consideration:

- Art from the Inside,
- Arts programs in the Moorhead cultural mall,
- Arts programs in the Maplewood cultural mall,
- Asian Economic Development Association,
- Capri Theater,
- Minnesota State Band,
- Fight for Your Dreams,
- HIRPHA International for Oromo youth programs,
- Hmong Cultural Center,
- Midnimo,
- MN Zej Zog,
- People in Action,
- Phyllis Wheatley Community Center,
- Safe Summer Nights,
- Siengkane Lao, MN
- Stairstep Foundation, and
- Walker West Music Academy.

The legislation does not require that MHC award a grant to an applicant that has been identified within the legislation as a priority. The above identified priorities will need to apply under the competitive grant process in order to receive funding.

An applicant that receives funding under this grant opportunity must do at least one of the following:

- Preserve and honor the cultural heritage of Minnesota,
- Provide education and student outreach in cultural diversity,
- Support the development of culturally diverse humanities programming, including arts programming, or
- Empower communities in building identity and culture, including preserving and honoring communities whose Indigenous cultures are endangered or disappearing.

Funding Availability

MHC will award $4,868,000 (less allowable administrative fee) in Community Identity & Heritage, Cultural Heritage grants.

Projects must be completed no later than December 31, 2027, with final reporting due January 31, 2028.

Applicants may request any amount of funding up to $300,000.

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.

Minnesota Humanities Center

Timeline

RFP posted	September 3, 2026
Information Session #1 (Virtual)	September 9, 2026, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Information Session #2 (Virtual)	September 17, 2026, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Deadline to request MHC feedback	Friday, October 9, 2026
Applications due no later than 6:00 p.m. CST	Monday, October 26, 2026
Applications under review	
Project end date	
Final reporting due	

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:
    - Preserve and honor the cultural heritage of Minnesota,
    - Provide education and student outreach in cultural diversity,
    - Support the development of culturally diverse humanities programming, including arts programming, by individuals and organizations, or
    - Empower communities in building identity and culture, including preserving and honoring communities whose Indigenous cultures are endangered or disappearing.

MHC reviews its records and uses the IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search to confirm good standing. If you are unsure whether you are in good standing with MHC, please contact MHC's Grants Administrators at grants@mnhum.org. MHC may grant an exemption to an organization that is not in good standing if the applicant uses a fiscal agent.

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.

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:

Minnesota Humanities Center

Information Session #1 (Virtual)	September 9, 2026, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (CDT)
Information Session #2 (Virtual)	September 17, 2026, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (CDT)

Zoom links for the public information sessions can be requested from Elizabeth Neary at lizzie@mnhum.org.

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 during a grant period.

Applicants may partner with other organizations in submitting a proposal. If multiple organizations are applying, one organization must be designated in the proposal as the "lead" applicant. The lead applicant serves as the main contact and receives the grant funding if the proposal is selected for a grant award.

If you request funding in the amount of $25,000 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 audits (must be 2023 and forward).
- If your annual revenue was at least $50,000 but less than $750,000, please submit your most recent IRS Forms 990 (must be 2023 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) reviewed 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. CST, on **Monday, October 26, 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 MHC progress report.

Selection Process

Applicants will go through an eligibility check and initial review. Each applicant will be reviewed on a 100-point scale. Applications will be assessed using the following scoring factors and weight criteria:

Project Details (25)

- How well does the project (select as many as applicable but at least one of the following):
  - Preserve and honor the cultural heritage of Minnesota?
  - Provide education and student outreach on cultural diversity?

- Support the development of culturally diverse humanities programming, including arts programming, by individuals and organizations?
- Empower communities in building identity and culture, including but not limited to preserving and honoring communities whose Indigenous cultures are endangered or disappearing?

Community Involvement (25)

- How were stakeholders/members of the community/board involved in developing this grant proposal and how were their ideas incorporated?
- How will stakeholders/members of the community/board be involved in implementing and evaluating the success of the project?
- Can you identify past success in collaborating with the community?

Project Management (30)

- How will the project be completed on a timely basis?
- How will the reporting of expenses and hours be correctly reported?
- How will the goals for the project be achieved?
- Does the budget submitted align with the proposed project?
- Is the budget in MHC's required template?
- 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 success of the project clear?
- Is the evaluation process clear as to methodology?
- What audience are you attempting to reach with your project?
- How do you expect to impact the audience you are attempting to reach?
- What steps are you 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.

Minnesota Humanities Center

Site Visit

If you receive a grant award of $50,000 or 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:

- $100,000 or more, must undergo a formal notice and bidding process.
- 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 use 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.

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.