

## **Narrative**

**1. What do you plan to do? Provide a detailed description of your project. It should focus on the activities that will be supported by Ohio Humanities funds. Provide exact information about what will take place, where and when. As much as possible, describe who will perform the activities. Identify the resources necessary to make the project happen. Ohio Humanities recommends that as much as possible all key project personnel should be confirmed at the time of application.**

The project team seeks a planning grant to determine options for public outreach that will celebrate the importance of the Little Miami River and engage diverse public audiences in the history and culture broadly associated with the river and its greater watershed.

Fifty years ago, the Little Miami River became Ohio's first designated State Scenic River, with designation as a "National Wild and Scenic River" coming soon afterwards. Recognized in segments over a period of years, now the entire length of the Little Miami (107 miles) is celebrated for its distinctive natural character. The Scenic River designation is primarily focused on the natural features of the river, but it is impossible to separate those natural features from the rich historical and cultural heritage that is connected to the Little Miami. As the State of Ohio Department of Natural Resources notes, the Little Miami River Valley is "rich with relics of Ohio's past." According to federal law, formal characterization as a "wild" river affirms that such a river largely remains in its natural state: "These represent vestiges of primitive America" (Public Law 90-541, U.S.C. 1271 et seq., October 2, 1968). This project seeks to highlight historical and current human connections with the river.

The planning grant will help to determine the public reach of the project, which is anticipated to be high impact. The watershed extends over portions of eleven counties in southwestern Ohio. These counties comprise approximately 22% of Ohio's total population. The Little Miami flows through five counties, which comprise approximately 15% of Ohio's total population. The Little Miami Conservancy estimates that each year 850,000 people enjoy the river and its environment.

We seek funding from OHC to: conduct preliminary research on the human history of the watershed in order to highlight key sites of interest; identify specialists in relevant fields, such as Native American history and culture; hold focus groups; conduct preliminary interviews with stakeholders; and prepare a report on findings. The team will also address the logistical and technical challenges associated with the creation of digital tools that can promote public engagement. Funds will be used primarily as modest honoraria for the personnel involved, all of whom bring distinctive professional expertise to bear on the success of the project. There are many demands on their time and we want to signal that their expertise is vital to the project. Funding will also be used for mileage reimbursement to and from meeting sites throughout the watershed, per diem as appropriate for project personnel who may be leading focus groups or meetings, and meeting materials (such as surveys, printed copies of materials, or mailings).

The project team plans to conduct project activities over a two-month period, tentatively 1 May-30 June. The project team will meet together at least four times. Team members will lead three to four information-gathering sessions to be hosted at strategic locations along the length of the Little Miami River. Those sessions will be advertised via community networks and non-profit mailing lists with the intent of soliciting feedback around knowledge of, and interest in engaging more fully, the history and culture of the Little Miami River. The planning team will also conduct research on additional material and cultural resources associated with the history of the Little Miami River.

**2. How do the humanities inform this project? Identify the humanities disciplines that are relevant to your project. What questions or issues will the project address? Why are these questions or issues significant at this moment? What will the participants learn, experience, or gain as a result of your project? Be specific. Give examples.**

Humanities inquiry defines this planning project. The overarching goal is to explore, record, and highlight the human experience—past and present—connected to the Little Miami River. In particular, we will explore historical, cultural, and ethical perspectives. With regard to historical perspectives, we seek to research and explain some of the major historical changes associated with the Little Miami and its larger content. This includes the migration and settlement of multiple Native American populations, the arrival of European settlers and their subsequent conflicts that were rooted in international geopolitical tensions, the growth of industry along the river and its significance for the land and economy of the region and the nation, agricultural developments that shaped the land as much as the culture, and the emergence of (relatively) recent issues of environmental concern and stewardship. In particular, given that 2019 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Scenic Rivers Act, we will explore the socio-cultural factors that led to the act and the Little Miami's designation as a wild and scenic river. With regard to cultural perspectives, we seek to identify and provide a preliminary catalog of extant material and cultural resources associated with the Little Miami River. Our intent is to call attention to the rich cultural artifacts of the area that are connected with not only the human presence in the area, but also human activity that has reshaped the landscape. This may include Native American burial mounds; historical structures; printed sources that document the history of the region, such as maps and deed records; and photos, diaries, and personal artifacts that transmit the significance of the human experience. With regard to ethical perspectives, we seek to connect efforts in the 1960s to preserve the Little Miami as a state and scenic river to the broader rise of environmental consciousness in the United States, and to explore what that consciousness has meant for an examination of the balance between human needs and environmental conservation.

**3. Who are the humanities professionals and what are their roles on the project? Please include a one paragraph biography that emphasizes the humanities professional's relevant skills and knowledge for this project. What are their specific roles in the project? Be specific.**

The project's merits lie in its potential for large-scale public engagement and in the diverse expertise of the project team. Each member brings to the project distinctive background experience, professional skills, training, and/or community connections that are vital to the success of the project. The team includes faculty, staff, and/or volunteers from University of Dayton (UD), the University of Cincinnati (UC), the Lower Miami Watershed Network, Antioch University, and Woolpert Engineering. The involvement of all of the personnel listed below has been confirmed.

Jennifer Speed, UD (PhD, history), will serve as project director and humanities scholar. She has served as a professional historian on numerous multi-partner, local history projects involving the study and interpretation of material culture (e.g., historical maps, diaries and personal letters, archival materials held in public and private repositories, etc.). Key projects include: a PBS documentary called *Children of the Revolución*; a cultural history of San Antonio's Hemisfair Park (ca. 1718-1968) commissioned by the City of San Antonio; and cultural-historical research on structures featured in the Historical American Buildings Survey (HABS). She is co-Project Director of a current NEH-funded project on Dayton native Paul Laurence Dunbar. Dr. Speed is an experienced project manager who will guide the team in implementing the project and reporting on project outcomes.

Zach Piso, UD (PhD, philosophy), is Assistant Professor of Philosophy. His research explores the diverse values at stake in environmental science, policy, and management, often through interdisciplinary and community-engaged collaborations on challenges such as ecological restoration and agricultural ethics.

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These projects pair traditional philosophical investigation with qualitative and quantitative methods from the social sciences including ethnography, interviews, and surveys. Recent peer-reviewed publications include the evaluation of a dialogue-based approach to environmental ethics education with PlosONE and the chapter on John Dewey and environmental philosophy for the Oxford Handbook of Dewey. Piso is enthusiastic about experiential and project-based pedagogy, with students in his Environmental Ethics and Sustainability Research courses working on local environmental problems in the Dayton community. Dr. Piso will shape the team's approach to ethnographical research via oral interviews.

William Marvin, UD (PhD, philosophy), is an award-winning humanities educator and lecturer in Philosophy at UD with a wide range of teaching experience in applied, environmental and professional ethics. He has deep roots in southwest Ohio, where he has taught at several colleges and universities. He helped to develop the interdisciplinary Antioch World Classics curriculum. Professor Marvin has presented professional ethics seminars to businesses and professional groups. He is currently coordinator for Hanley Sustainability Institute's Artist in Sustainable Community initiative at UD. Beyond his educational settings, Dr. Marvin is a community leader in Dayton and currently serves as President of the Five Oaks Neighborhood Improvement Association.

Kristen Fleming, UC (PhD candidate [ABD], history) is an environmental historian with expertise in Ohio riparian systems and U.S. political and environmental movements. Her focus will be on locating a historical thread that addresses changes in the politics and culture associated with the Little Miami River. Additionally, she will identify key archival sources (i.e., location of repositories and nature of materials) that may be relevant for the project, such as texts and printed materials, oral histories, and artifacts. She will provide guidance on the utilization and interpretation of those sources for subsequent public history engagement. She has experience developing exhibit materials for public engagement, including "Rethinking Porkopolis."

Brooke Bryan, Antioch University (MA, oral history methodology), has extensive experience developing and implementing local history projects involving digital humanities and oral history. She also brings capabilities in navigating the sensitivities of community partnerships that are vital for place-based humanities projects. She has been a frequent collaborator on OHC projects. She will guide the development of framing questions and advise how to integrate oral histories into the broader cultural history of the Little Miami River.

#### Additional Team Members

Hope Taft (Community Leader) is a respected community advocate and volunteer with decades of experience in public engagement, and action, related to issues that matter most to Ohioans. She spearheaded the creation of the Little Miami Watershed Network in order to protect the Little Miami River. She has demonstrated experience in cultivating long-term, meaningful working relations with public leaders and citizens around matters of environmental resilience, and she is a trusted collaborator. She will utilize her community connections and her knowledge of the Little Miami River watershed to reach stakeholders and informants, guide public meetings, and shape future efforts to engage the public.

Aaron Lawrence, Woolpert Engineering (Technology Director, Unmanned Systems) is a geographic information systems professional with more than 18 years of GIS, mapping, and cartography experience. He is a recognized geospatial subject matter expert, and a long-time volunteer on GIS mapping projects at Glen Helen Nature Preserve. He will guide the team in exploring the potential for digital maps and images associated with the Little Miami River, and advise on the challenges and opportunities of creating digital trail experiences that can promote public engagement.

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Leslie King, UD (Director, Rivers Institute) For over 20 years, Leslie has been educating and inspiring the next generation of environmental and sustainability leaders. At UD, Leslie leads the River Stewards, a program focused on developing undergraduate leadership and civic engagement skills around our local rivers and water resources. Using an asset-based model and watershed lens for community development, Leslie has developed a curriculum and leadership program, which trains students in developing solutions to the complex issues and problems communities face, with regard to sustainability, and environmental and social justice. She will advise the team on river-related community engagement and stakeholder involvement.

**4. How will you publicize the project? How will you let people know about your project? If you plan to use social media, please identify the tools you plan to use (Facebook, Twitter, email, etc.) and your current reach (followers, likes, # of email addresses). If you plan to utilize newspapers, television, or radio, please identify the specific broadcasters and publications. Provide an outline and timeline for your publicity.**

The organizations involved have an enormous public reach through their websites and social media channels, through their constituents and community partners, through local and regional print and audio outlets that feature their activities as a matter of public interest (e.g., the Dayton Daily News, WYSO), through membership listservs, and through flyers and postcard mailings. The planning process will help to refine the most effective outlets for sharing the project and promoting engagement.

**5. Who is the intended audience? If it is a public event, how many people are likely to attend? If your organization has an established constituency, how will this attract new audiences? Programs sponsored by college and universities must make a concerted and detailed effort to draw an audience that extends beyond the higher education environment.**

The general public is the focus of all elements of the long-term project. As noted above, the Little Miami River watershed comprises eleven counties in southwestern Ohio, home to nearly 22% of Ohio's total population. The river itself flows through five counties that are home 13% of Ohio's total population. This planning grant intends to reach a select audience of stakeholders and informants, which includes residents and experts (e.g., historians, naturalists, volunteers with river-related organizations, etc.). We seek their local and historical knowledge about the region. Long-term, the audience will be residents of the five Ohio counties that touch the Little Miami River, members of the public who may attend public lectures offered throughout the watershed, students and teachers who may have an interest in local humanities research, cultural enthusiasts who seek to learn more about the history of the Little Miami River watershed, business owners near the Little Miami River, and boaters and hikers who enjoy the natural elements of the Little Miami corridor.

**6. What are the goals and outcomes of the project and how will it be evaluated? How will this project enhance your community's appreciation and/or knowledge of the humanities? Internally, how will your organization decide whether this project is a success? What metrics will the organization use to evaluate the project? Please be specific. Who are your evaluators? Projects above \$2,001 must have an outside evaluator. The outside evaluator is a person who is able to judge the success of a project in reaching its stated goals. The evaluator should not be connected to the project in another way.**

This is a planning grant. The overarching project goal is to utilize a humanities lens to explore and celebrate the rich culture, history, and human experience associated with the Little Miami River, with a special focus on the fiftieth anniversary of its designation as a scenic river. The intent is to plan for a larger, long-term project that will lead to significant public engagement with the history and culture of Little Miami River.

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The four long-term project outcomes are: 1) to determine the best ways to reach public audiences; 2) to explore diverse opportunities for engagement; 3) to identify, and propose ways to catalog and share publicly, the range of extant cultural resources and artifacts that are connected to the Little Miami River; and 4) identify members of the public, professionals, and members of non-profit organizations who are key “informants” or stakeholders connected to the Little Miami River. Success will be reflected in a final report that documents what the project team has learned about the feasibility for achieving long-term project outcomes. A final project report will reflect the planning activities connected to each outcome. N.B. The dollar award anticipated for this project does not require an outside evaluator.

**7. Who is the sponsoring organization? Give a brief description of your organization. When was the organization founded? How does this project fit with the goals and usual activities of your organization? How is your organization qualified to carry out the project?**

The project is sponsored by the University of Dayton (UD), founded in 1850. The project is a natural extension of our commitment to liberal arts learning and community engagement built on reciprocity and mutuality. UD has an impeccable track record of securing and successfully managing grant-funded projects from private and public sponsors. The project also involves employees and volunteers from: the Little Miami Watershed Network (LMWN), Antioch University, University of Cincinnati, and Woolpert Engineering. LMWN is part of the Greene County Community Foundation. Each organization brings distinctive capabilities and experience to manage the project and achieve intended outcomes. The University of Dayton will contribute matching funds (cash and in-kind) for the project in accordance with OHC guidelines.