

What?

The Ohio Humanities Alliance is accepting applications for Spark planning grants. The purpose of this cycle is to provide catalytic support for public humanities projects at the planning stage. The project types that are eligible for support are documentary media projects or exhibitions.



When?

Fall 2026-Spring 2027

- Application Available: October 12, 2026
- Grant Applications due: November 20, 2026
- Decisions by December 18, 2026
- All projects will have a start date of January 4, 2027. Projects must be completed by July 2, 2027.

How much?

Spark Planning Grants

- Grant amounts of up to **\$2,500**
- All grants must provide dollar for dollar match (cash or in-kind) for a total project budget of no less than **\$5,000**
- A minimum of **10** grants will be awarded for this cycle.

Who is eligible to apply?

- Only non-profit organizations fully located within the State of Ohio, as well as educational or local governmental institutions are eligible.
- No fiscal agents or sponsors are eligible to apply for these grants. The sponsoring organization must be able to make a material and substantial contribution to the humanities work of the project.
- Organizations must have a SAM.gov number at the time of the application.

If you are interested in applying, please contact **David Merkowitz**, Director of Grants and Programs, (dmerkowitz@ohiohumanities.org or call 614-461-7802) to discuss your project.

To apply, visit: https://ohiohumanities.formstack.com/forms/grants_application_spark

Grant Guideline FAQ:

As these grants are supported with funds from the NEH, the project may not:

- promote a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view;
- advocate for a particular program of social or political action; or
- support specific public policies or legislation.

Considerations for Documentary Media Projects:

- Documentary media projects must remain under the control of non-profit entities throughout the entire lifecycle of the project including at the broadcast and distribution phase.

Considerations for Exhibitions:

- Organizations may apply to carry out the planning for new temporary exhibitions, traveling exhibitions, or significant renovations to permanent exhibitions.

Involvement of Humanities Professionals

- All projects must involve public humanities professionals at some stage in the funded planning process.

Application Instructions:

The application was designed to capture requests for planning or project grants. However, for this cycle, we will be accepting only applications for planning activities. As a result, the best way to answer some of the questions will be different than if one was applying for a project grant.

The following guidelines are focused on the fields where the response to the question is different since this is for planning rather than project support.

- **Project Start and End Dates:** All projects should use a project start date of January 4, 2027. The projects should have an end date no later than July 2, 2027.
- **Expected attendance:** Estimate the potential audience count when the project becomes available to the public. Use this question to show the scope of potential impact rather than a careful prediction.
- **Project summary:** Instead of identifying the public events that will take place as a result of this funding, identify the public events that will be planned.
- **Project Narrative Questions:** Your answers should describe the project itself and the planning process that will occur during the grant period. Since this is a planning grant, the project description is likely to be speculative to a degree. However, the eventual outcomes and outputs should be described in detail enough to provide shape for the planning process. The reviewers expect that much of the detail provided will be provisional rather than confirmed at time of application.
 - **Q1** – Address the outcomes of the planning grant itself and desired outcomes beyond this particular grant.

- **Q2** – This response must show a clear understanding of how the project will be informed by the humanities and what the humanities are.
- **Q3** – The response should include confirmed members of sponsoring organization, planning committee, or similar structure. Humanities professionals must be involved in the planning process. They do not necessarily need to be confirmed at the time of application, however the expertise and skills of those identified should be relevant to the project.
- **Q4** – The intended audience component can be derived from a description of the usual audience for activities of the sponsoring organization.
- **Q5** – No change.
- **Project Timeline:**
 - **Planning:** This section should cover the entire period of performance (project start and end dates). It may also include known planning activities before and after the period of performance.
 - **Publicity:** Describe how Ohio Humanities Alliance support for the planning activities will be communicated to the public. Examples include posts on social media, an item on the institutional website, or a note in the newsletter. Please note that Ohio Humanities Alliance support at this stage generally means that the acknowledgements of support should follow the full lifecycle of the project. The prominence of those acknowledgements would become less significant at later stages should Ohio Humanities Alliance not provide any additional support for the project.
 - **Public Activities:** This response is likely to be provisional, but providing some sense of when the project will be available to the public would be helpful.
 - **Evaluation and Reporting:** For this project, identifying the final grant report is sufficient.