

ALABAMA PUBLIC HUMANITIES GRANTS

Grant Guidelines

Sept. 1, 2026 to Apr. 30, 2027

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT ALABAMA PUBLIC HUMANITIES GRANTS	2
About the Alabama Humanities Alliance	2
About the humanities	2
YOUR AHA STAFF CONTACT	3
WHO WE FUND	3
WHAT WE FUND	4
WHAT WE DON'T FUND	5
GRANT CATEGORIES	5
APPLICATION DEADLINES APPLICATION PROCESS	6
GRANT REQUIREMENTS	7
I. Primary project components	7
II. Administrative requirements	9
III. Budget requirements	11
APPENDICES	14
A. Evaluation: How does AHA review my proposal?	14
B. Checklist: Am I ready to apply?	16
B. Calendar: AHA grant deadlines (2026-2027)	18



OUR MISSION

The Alabama Humanities Alliance exists to provide context, build empathy, and make our state a more vibrant place to live. All through the humanities.

ABOUT US

Founded in 1974, the Alabama Humanities Alliance (AHA) serves as the primary source of grants for public humanities programming in Alabama. As a nonprofit and nonpartisan statewide organization, we're passionate about using the humanities to make Alabama better. AHA supports programs that encourage impactful storytelling, lifelong learning, and civic engagement. We believe the humanities can bring Alabamians together and help us better connect with the communities we call home.

AHA awards Alabama Public Humanities Grants on an ongoing basis. These grants support public humanities programming in communities statewide, helping to promote the appreciation and understanding of history, literature, civics, culture, and more.

ABOUT THE HUMANITIES

The humanities are a set of disciplines related to human culture and the study of how people process and document the human experience. The humanities emphasize analysis, interpretation, and dialogue to provide cultural context to stories and ideas that allow us to reflect on who we are as individuals and members of a global society. Exploring humanities subjects — such as Alabama's history, storytelling, cultures, traditions, and more — encourages critical thinking and gives us the opportunity to relate to others.

AHA funds all Alabama Public Humanities Grants with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), which defines the humanities disciplines as follows:

- Languages
- Literature
- History
- Philosophy and ethics
- Jurisprudence
- Archaeology
- Comparative religion
- Art history, theory, and criticism
- Social sciences employing humanistic methods



AHA STAFF CONTACT

AHA's grants director is available to provide guidance on eligibility, project ideas, budget questions, and technical difficulties. Comments and suggestions are based solely on prior experience with grant review sessions and do not guarantee funding.

Applicants may contact AHA's grants director, Graydon Rust, at grust@alabamahumanities.org or by [scheduling a call](#). Additional information is available online at alabamahumanities.org/grants.

WHO WE FUND

The Alabama Humanities Alliance awards grants to nonprofit organizations, accredited public and 501(c)(3) institutions of higher education, state and local government agencies, and federally recognized Native American tribal governments that either have a physical presence, in or regularly serve, an Alabama audience. All applicants must have an EIN, a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), and be in good standing with AHA.

Applicants often include the following types of organizations:

- Libraries and archives
- Museums and historic sites
- Cultural and community organizations
- Civics clubs and historical societies
- Religious organizations
- Colleges and universities
- Municipalities and government entities
- Film, television, and digital media producers

AHA regularly awards grants to organizations that have a primary mission that falls outside of the humanities, including organizations focused more on the arts and social services, as long as the funding supports a public humanities project.

AHA *does not* award grants to individuals, for-profit entities, federal entities, or organizations that have been debarred or suspended by any federal department or agency.

AHA *does not* award grants to organizations through entities functioning solely as fiscal sponsors or agents. Partnerships are allowed, but an eligible organization must lead as the primary applicant and serve as the grantee.



WHAT WE FUND

AHA awards grants to support public humanities projects for a variety of topics and formats, and encourages applicants to develop imaginative proposals for their audiences. (Note: See pages 7-8 for a breakdown of primary project components.)

The three essential components of successful grant proposals are:

1. Public participation
2. Strong humanities content
3. Direct involvement of humanities scholars

AHA often funds the following types of projects:

- Lectures and panel discussions
- Conferences and symposia
- Cultural and literary festivals
- Reading discussions
- Teacher workshops
- Temporary/traveling exhibitions
- Public and oral history projects
- Moderated art talks
- Documentary films or series
- Podcasts, apps, digital media

A note on the arts: AHA often receives applications for arts-related programs. While AHA does *not* fund the creative process of art — such as art classes, concerts, and other art-making activities — AHA regularly funds arts-related projects that explore the cultural, aesthetic, or historical contexts of art.

Examples of arts-related programs could include a moderated discussion with artists at a gallery opening; interpretive displays or films developed in conjunction with an exhibition; a scholar-led talk providing context before a concert or theatrical production; a podcast featuring interviews with authors interpreting works of literature; a conversation between a literary scholar and a poet after a public reading; sessions at a music festival that highlight the history of a genre of music or its cultural significance on a region.

For examples of a wide variety of successful applications, [read about AHA's 2025 grant recipients](#).



WHAT WE DON'T FUND

AHA does *not* fund the following types of costs and activities due to federal and NEH-specific funding restrictions:

- the creation or performance of art, including creative writing
- fundraising activities or events
- general operating support and administrative costs
- the publication of books
- food and beverages outside of travel costs
- the purchase of land or facilities, construction, renovation, or permanent installations
- lobbying, policy studies, or the support of specific policies or legislation
- promotion of a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view
- advocacy for a particular program of social or political action
- environmental justice initiatives or activities
- promotion of gender ideology
- promotion of discriminatory equity ideology
- support for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) or diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives or activities

In addition, AHA *does not* fund projects that primarily emphasize motivation, empowerment, leadership, economic development, or skills training. We are also unlikely to fund individual research or scholarship, study towards an academic degree, or the *process* of learning without significant interpretation and discussion of specific humanities content. Field trips are also unlikely to be funded without additional *public* programming incorporated into the project.

GRANT CATEGORIES

Mini Grant (up to \$2,500)

Designed for flexibility, Mini Grants feature a simplified and quicker application process, monthly deadlines, and no required cost share match. Mini Grants often support, but are not limited to, singular programs and events — such as lectures, panel discussions, or symposia — or other low-cost projects like moderated book clubs and small traveling exhibitions.



Major Grant (up to \$15,000)

Major Grants are offered three times a year, require a 1:1 cost share match, and support a broad range of projects. Commonly supported projects include lecture series, temporary exhibitions, oral history projects, humanities-rich conferences and festivals, documentary films, and humanities-centered podcasts.

*Note that AHA previously offered a separate line of Media Grants supporting projects like documentary films and podcasts. These projects are now primarily funded through the Major Grant offering.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

AHA is offering the following deadlines between September 2026 and April 2027:

- Mini Grants are offered monthly, with deadlines on the **first of each month**.
- Major Grant deadlines are **October 1 and February 1**.

See Appendix B for a full calendar of confirmed deadlines.

Important note: Funded activities may begin **45 days** after a Mini Grant application and **75 days** after a Major Grant application. This gives AHA time to review applications and process approved projects; it also gives grantees time to plan and promote their AHA-funded activities.

APPLICATION PROCESS

AHA encourages all applicants — and particularly first-time applicants — to contact AHA's grants director to discuss project ideas and verify eligibility before beginning the application process. Contact Graydon Rust at grust@alabamahumanities.org or by [scheduling a call](#).

How to apply:

AHA's application process is entirely digital. To apply for a grant, you must first create an account through AHA's [Online Grants Portal](#).

Optional draft proposals:

AHA is committed to providing support throughout the application process, including written feedback on draft proposals. Applicants, especially first-time applicants, are strongly encouraged to submit a draft proposal, composed of an abridged narrative



and budget, to AHA for feedback. Draft proposals must be submitted through the online portal at least one month before each final application deadline.

Award notification:

AHA aims to review and announce award decisions for all Mini Grants within 30 days of each deadline, and all Major Grants within 60 days of each deadline.

Project start date:

Grant-funded costs and activities may begin 45 days after each application deadline for Mini Grants, and 75 days after each application deadline for Major Grants.

GRANT REQUIREMENTS I: PRIMARY PROJECT COMPONENTS

I. Public participation

AHA-funded projects should connect the public to humanities topics and themes through programs that respond to community interest, encourage dialogue, and stimulate audiences to think critically about humanities topics. Projects must be open to a non-academic audience and should be accessible to a broad population, including people and places that are not commonly served by rich humanities offerings.

AHA prioritizes funding programs that are open to the public at no cost. Applicants may, however, charge modest fees when necessary. When charging fees, AHA encourages applicants to offer scholarships, free admission days, and other flexible admission policies to keep projects accessible to the broadest possible audience.

Applicants may design projects to target a particular population, such as teachers, veterans, the elderly, or the incarcerated. However, applicants may not limit participation to dues- or tuition-paying members of a specific organization. Applicants such as schools, colleges, and universities must demonstrate a commitment to reach an audience *beyond* the campus community.

II. Humanities content

The subject and topic of all AHA-funded projects must include one or more of the humanities disciplines (see page 2). Humanities content should be central to the project and adequately explored and interpreted through quality humanities scholarship.



Applicants should present humanities themes and content to their audience in an engaging format that stokes curiosity, promotes reflection, and allows people to better understand the vibrant and complex world in which we live. Public programs should encourage dialogue by presenting balanced viewpoints and raising questions among scholars and the audience.

III. Humanities scholars

AHA-funded projects must include the involvement of at least one humanities scholar to provide in-depth knowledge of the humanities content and support adequate interpretation of the material. AHA defines a humanities scholar as an expert in one or more humanities disciplines.

A scholar's expertise may result from holding an advanced academic degree in the humanities, from a verifiable record of working, teaching, or publishing in the humanities, or from serving as the keeper of community traditions and knowledge. Examples of scholars include a tribal elder, an independent expert on American Literature, and a history professor at a university.

Humanities scholars may serve the project in a variety of roles, including as consultants, researchers, presenters, and evaluators. In general, humanities scholars must have expertise relevant to chosen topics and should be involved in both the planning and implementation of the project. AHA prefers to fund projects that connect the audience directly with scholars.

While AHA only requires one humanities scholar per project, applicants should connect with additional scholars when appropriate. For Major Grant applications, applicants must involve at least one scholar who is not also serving as project director.

Applicants may also benefit from the involvement of professionals who may not meet the definition of a humanities scholar, including public educators, artists, librarians and archivists, and scholars from non-humanities disciplines.



GRANT REQUIREMENTS II: ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Cost share

In general, cost sharing or matching consists of all project expenses not attributed directly to potential funding provided by AHA, including funding from the applicant's own budget, cash raised from third-party sources, anticipated program income (such as admission fees), or in-kind contributions (donated time or services).

AHA requires a 1:1 match for Major Grant awards, but no match is required for Mini Grant awards. Grantees may optionally choose to include more cost share than required in their award. The source and use of cost share must be documented and consistent with federal requirements found in [2 CFR 200.306](#). Grantees may include unrecovered indirect costs and program income as cost sharing.

Program income

Program income is gross income that is earned or received by an awardee from the activities supported by award funds or from products resulting from award activities. It includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed and from the sale of items produced under an award; usage or rental fees for equipment of property acquired under an award; admission fees; broadcast of distribution rights; and license fees and royalties on patents and copyrights.

Program income does *not* include rebates, credits, discounts, and interest earned on any of them. Awardees may use the program income that they generate during the award period to meet their cost-sharing requirements. Awardees may deduct the costs incident to the generation of program income — if these are not already charged to the award — to determine program income. AHA places no restrictions on the use of program income earned after the award period.

Project Director

AHA requires all applicants to name a Project Director who is responsible for managing and implementing the grant project. The Project Director should ensure compliance with the grant guidelines and terms of the grant agreement, and help prepare the narrative and financial portions of all reports.



Financial Officer

AHA requires applicants to name a Financial Officer to oversee all record-keeping and accounting of grant funds, matching contributions, and services received. The Financial Officer may *not* also serve as the Project Director. The Financial Officer is usually a qualified accountant or bookkeeper and may be from the applicant organization or a third party. The Financial Officer, in consultation with the Project Director, should help prepare the financial portion of all reports.

Project evaluation

AHA requires applicants to submit an evaluation plan that is appropriate for assessing the project's identified goals. Evaluations are meant to gather the feedback necessary to improve future programming and may include audience surveys and questionnaires, independent evaluators, and evaluation consultants.

Grant period

The grant period encompasses both the period of performance and budget period for each grant award. All project activities must be completed within the grant period and all project costs attributed to the award, including the applicant's cost share match, must be incurred within the grant period.

Applicants request their own grant period start and end dates based on their project timeline. The grant period may begin after a required waiting period that allows AHA to review applications and begin the administrative requirements of grant awards. The waiting period begins on the final application deadline and lasts 45 days for Mini Grants and 75 days for Major Grants. The grant period may remain open for up to two years. AHA may allow extensions to awarded projects, but extensions should not be assumed or expected.

Repeat funding

AHA will not fund multiple grants with overlapping grant periods to the same organization, and AHA will not fund the same project through awards to multiple organizations.

For colleges and universities, AHA considers each academic department or affiliate as a separate organization when considering repeat funding. For municipalities, library systems, and other large institutions with multiple locations or affiliates, AHA may consider each affiliate as a separate organization when considering repeat funding.



In the case of annual programs or long-term projects, AHA will only fund the same program or project for **three** consecutive years. After the third year, organizations must sit out one calendar year before reapplying for the same project. When sitting out a year, applicants may apply for funding for a different project.

AHA will consider an organization's past award activity as an example of the organization's capacity to plan, execute, and administer successful projects. AHA will also consider and evaluate each application on its individual merits and does not guarantee repeat funding.

Post-award responsibilities

Grantees must remain in compliance with AHA guidelines over the course of their funded projects. Grantees are also expected to recognize AHA and NEH's support in any promotional materials about their project; a media toolkit is available from AHA for this purpose.

Applicants may contact AHA for sample copies of grant agreements and other resources related to post-award responsibilities, such as reporting requirements, financial management standards, acknowledgment of support, and compliance with applicable federal laws.

GRANT REQUIREMENTS III:

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

AHA requires all applicants to submit a project budget using AHA's budget narrative template supplied on all application and reporting forms. The applicant's budget should illustrate how the applicant will spend AHA funding and the estimated cost share match, including cash and in-kind support from both the applicant and third-party sources.

All project costs must be reasonable, necessary to accomplish project objectives, and incurred during the grant period. Costs should be valued in relation to rates paid for similar work, current market prices, or fair rental charges. Grantees must follow standard accounting procedures for all grant awards.

An organized and thorough budget bolsters a proposal and instills confidence in AHA's reviewers that the applicant has the capacity to complete the project successfully.



The line items included in the budget should be well-researched and organized into the following categories:

1. Administration

AHA does not directly fund administrative expenses, but applicants may apply direct administrative costs to their cost share match. Such expenses often include salaries, including fringe benefits, for personnel such as the Project Director, Financial Officer, and other personnel employed by the applicant who are directly involved in project management.

Applicants may include volunteer services as cost share if the service is an integral and necessary part of the project. Volunteer services should be calculated at a rate paid for similar work by the organization or by other employers in the same labor market.

2. Honoraria

Honoraria include payments to humanities scholars, professionals, and other resource personnel directly involved in the project. Expenses for faculty or salaried employees of the applicant's organization are not eligible for AHA funding but may be included as cost share match. Applicants may employ interns, students, or similar positions for project activities if individuals are not receiving academic credit for their work.

3. Travel

Applicants may request travel expenses for transportation, lodging, subsistence, and related items for travel costs that are necessary, reasonable, and directly attributable to specific project work. These costs may be charged on an actual cost basis, on a per diem or mileage basis, or on a combination of the two, based on the organization's established travel policies.

Necessary airfare must be undertaken on U.S. flag air carriers at the customary standard commercial airfare (coach or equivalent), the federal government contract airfare, or the lowest commercial discount airfare unless otherwise approved. AHA does not fund international travel.

4. Supplies

Applicants may request funding for supplies based on the cost of purchased items. AHA regularly funds consumable supplies such as office materials or resources that the applicant will give away to program participants to increase participation, including



copies of books. AHA does not fund costs for promotional items and memorabilia, such as gift bags, t-shirts, and souvenirs.

AHA does not typically fund purchases of non-consumable supplies that the applicant will continue to use beyond the current project, including computers, furniture, or software. Applicants should justify requests for non-consumable supplies in the notes section of the budget. AHA does not fund archival or institutional acquisitions.

5. Facilities and equipment

Applicants may request funding to rent venues, meeting spaces, production facilities, etc. to carry out project activities. Applicants are often able to secure facilities at no cost, or at reduced rates, and may include donated space as in-kind cost share match.

AHA does not fund purchases of equipment, defined as tangible, nonexpendable property having a useful lifespan of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$10,000 or more per unit. Applicants may request funding for equipment rentals.

6. Promotion and publicity

Applicants may request promotional and publicity expenses to advertise the grant project, including through direct mail, radio and television, and social media. AHA does not fund advertising and public relations costs designed solely to promote the grantee or activities beyond the grant project.

7. Other expenses

Applicants may request funding for other necessary expenses as allowable per AHA and federal guidelines. Applicants are encouraged to verify eligibility of other expenses with AHA before submitting a final application.

8. Indirect costs

Indirect costs are expenses that the applicant incurs for common or joint objectives that the applicant cannot directly attribute to project activities. Indirect expenses generally include overhead and administrative costs such as office equipment purchases, liability insurance, executive salaries, accounting, and legal services.

Applicants may charge indirect costs at a rate of 15% of modified total direct costs. Applicants also may use unrecovered indirect costs as part of their cost share match.



APPENDIX A: Evaluation: How does AHA review my proposal?

The following is an overview of AHA's review process intended to improve your application, but it does not necessarily represent the entirety of AHA's decision-making.

Who reviews my application?

In general, AHA's grants director reviews all applications to verify your organization's eligibility and whether your requested budget is allowable. Applications are then fully reviewed and scored by a panel before final decisions are made.

For Mini Grants, the panel is comprised of AHA staff members and all decisions are finalized by AHA's executive director. Major Grants are reviewed by an external panel of subject matter experts, with award decisions determined by a committee of AHA board members.

How is eligibility determined?

The review begins with the verification of your organization's nonprofit status and eligibility (see page 3). This includes verifying your UEI number and whether your organization currently has another open grant award.

Reviewers also determine whether your project includes any unallowable activities (page 5), whether your grant period is allowable (page 10), and whether the costs listed in your budget are reasonable and allowable (pages 11-13). AHA may choose to make conditional or partial awards to correct technical mistakes or remove unallowable costs.

How is my application scored?

AHA's reviewers are asked to score your application based on five criteria. The first three are AHA's primary project components, which include public participation, humanities content, and the involvement of humanities scholars (pages 7-8). AHA also evaluates project creativity through your chosen content, format, and potential to reach new audiences.

The final and most heavily weighted portion of the review is based on the feasibility and design of your project. AHA prefers to fund projects that are well-planned and ready to be implemented when funding is awarded. This often means:



- defining the topics and format of your program, including details about specific humanities activities if they are a portion of a larger project
- identifying your personnel and scholars by name — and their qualifications and roles in the project
- describing your intended audience and how you plan to promote the project and engage community partners
- exploring potential venues or digital platforms for your activities
- providing a timeline that includes program dates
- crafting an organized and researched budget

AHA also strives to fund a wide assortment of projects across all of Alabama and may take into consideration the range of topics, formats, humanities disciplines, geographic locations, and audiences when determining awards.

Will I receive feedback if my project is not funded?

Yes, all applicants are encouraged to schedule a call with AHA's grants director to discuss the considerations behind AHA's decision and the potential for reapplication. Many times, projects are funded on the second or third application after incorporating feedback.



APPENDIX B: Checklist: Am I ready to apply?

Before you submit your application, review the following checklist to see if you've given yourself the best chance possible at receiving AHA grant funding.

- ✓ Is my project truly a *humanities* project...and not a completely different project I'm trying to shoehorn into a humanities application? (Reviewers will be able to tell!)
- ✓ Is my organization a nonprofit? Have I included my organization's UEI number (separate from our EIN)?
- ✓ If my organization already has an account in AHA's online portal, are my organization's details and contacts still accurate?
- ✓ Have I talked through my proposal with AHA's grants director? (If not, [schedule a call](#), post-haste!) Do I have time to submit an optional draft proposal for more feedback?
- ✓ Does my project have the three essential elements of any successful grant proposal to AHA? (Say it with us now: strong humanities content, public participation, and direct involvement of humanities scholars!)
- ✓ Is my project *feasible* to accomplish as written?
- ✓ Have I focused my proposal on the portions of the project that AHA is most likely to fund instead of a broad overview of a larger project that mixes humanities and non-humanities elements?
- ✓ Math check: Does my project start at least 45 days after the final deadline for a Mini Grant? Or at least 75 days after the final deadline for a Major Grant?
- ✓ Does my proposal include any ineligible program elements? (See pages 4-5 for examples of what AHA *does* and *does not* fund.)
- ✓ Have I prepared a thorough budget that aligns with my proposal narrative? Does my proposal include any ineligible costs? (For instance, those pesky food and drinks, non-consumable supplies, art-making materials, etc.)



- √ I wrote my proposal using an artificial intelligence program like ChatGPT, Claude, etc. Have I personally reviewed the application and verified the information is correct? Did AI turn it into dense, repetitive descriptions of humanities keywords and omit the most important details of my application? (Who, what, where, when, and why?)
- √ When I copied and pasted my proposal into the application, did I lose formatting like paragraph breaks and in-text links?
- √ Done! Wait. Did I remember to press “submit...”?



APPENDIX C: Calendar: AHA grant deadlines (2026-2027)

The Alabama Humanities Alliance's grant deadlines through April 2027 are as follows:

Major Grants

- Fall draft deadline: September 1, 2026
- Fall final deadline: October 1, 2026
- Winter draft deadline: January 1, 2027
- Winter final deadline: February 1, 2027

Mini Grants

- September 1, 2026
- October 1, 2026
- November 1, 2026
- December 1, 2026
- January 1, 2027
- February 1, 2027
- March 1, 2027
- April 1, 2027

Note: Optional drafts for Mini Grants may be submitted at least a month before your chosen deadline.

For more on AHA's grants, including the application portal, lists of past grant recipients, and more, visit alabamahumanities.org/grants.

