

# Humanities MONTANA

## **Humanities Montana Operational Priorities FY26**

**Goal:** To demonstrate the value of a statewide council focused on access to and advocacy for public humanities programming in Montana.

**Objectives:**

- **Advocate for continued public support for humanities programming, focused on Montana's writers, literature, history, and cultural traditions**
  - Collaborate with humanities organizations around the state to co-design and offer programs that speak to and about Montana's writers, literature, history, and cultural traditions.
  - Cultivate relationships with elected officials including MT's Congressional Delegation and the Governor's Office to develop humanities programs that support Montana civic education and other educational goals in the state.
  - Participating in Humanities on the Hill and other advocacy related activities with the Federation of State Humanities Councils
- **Increase visibility and tell our story of the impact of public humanities in Montana**
  - Better define and articulate the mission of HM and value of public humanities (focusing more specifically on Montana's literature, writers, history, and cultural traditions)
  - Refine our messaging to be more accessible to public audiences
  - Be proactive in telling our story
  - Clearly brand HM programming/partnerships
  - Develop a monthly communications calendar for HM and an annual report for stakeholders
- **Increase diversified funding and improve organizational and program sustainability by securing a 6-month reserve fund of \$600,000 and developing a viable and ongoing comprehensive \$1.5M annual development plan that will:**
  - Meet the \$50,000 match with FSHC and Mellon Foundation by December 2025.
  - Focus on major individual gifts and retain and engage current donors.
  - Identify 12 new private foundations for funding of HM programs
  - Build the case for state funding, particularly with funding for civic education programs, teacher education programs, or other educational outreach based in the humanities
- **Stabilize Humanities Montana programming focusing on key programs with external funding**
  - Provide statewide, high quality, public humanities programs offer opportunities for enrichment, connection, and learning for all Montanans:
    - The Democracy Project, a teen-led civic engagement program; with funding from private foundations including Engelhard Foundation and Llewellyn Foundation

- Montana Center for the Book; with funding from Library of Congress and Federation of State Humanities Councils with support from the Mellon Foundation.
    - MT Great Reads from Great Places Book awards featured at the Library of Congress' National Book Festival
    - One Book Montana—statewide read/public book clubs, offering small grants for book clubs
  - Re-envision HM's Speakers Bureau to align with sponsored programs:
    - Montana Poet Laureate Speaker Program with funding from MT Cultural Trust
    - Great Reads from Great Places authors (funding from LOC)
    - One Book Montana author or speaker (seeking private funding)
    - Montana 250th Speakers (exploring funding from Washington Foundation and/or MT 250 Commission)
    - "The Study" virtual programming (overlapping with 250<sup>th</sup> and MT Poet Laureate speakers)
  - Public Humanities Fellowship (funding from FSHC with support from Mellon Foundation, with potential individual sponsors)
- **Explore program development to align with sponsored funding opportunities or revenue generation/contracts, and model after successful programs across the country**

May be done with current staffing and modest added private funding:

    - Develop an adult version of the Democracy Project
    - Teacher Scholarships for Professional Development in the Humanities

These ideas offer examples of programs that would require more substantial sponsorship to bring on additional staff or contracted services; some may be possible if NEH funding is restored on a consistent basis:

    - Book Festival
    - Museums on Main Street with Smithsonian
    - Clemente Course for the Humanities for MT veterans
    - Living Room Conversations (Wyoming Humanities)
    - Humanities Teachers Summer Institutes (Humanities Idaho)
    - Regional Humanities Networks/ Humanities Corps (Missouri Humanities + AmeriCorps partnership)
    - HM Podcast; ex. Human Powered – Humanity Unlocked (Wisconsin Humanities)
  - **Pause general grantmaking indefinitely, unless partnered or supported with sponsored programs.**