

Humanities Montana Grants Committee Meeting

September 12, 2023

Zoom, 11:00 AM

Present: Jennifer Corning (chair), Carla Homstad, Jeremy Carl, Ray Ekness, Lathie Poole, Jill Baker (executive director), and Megan Sundry (grants manager).

Committee member Francine Spang-Willis resigned from the board on Thursday, September 7th and therefore was not in attendance.

A quorum was present.

Committee Chair Jennifer Corning called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m., welcomed the committee, and thanked everyone for reviewing proposals. Jennifer noted that all 21 proposals were reviewed by 5 to 8 board members and that the committee will discuss proposals with weighted scores 80% and above.

Ray Ekness recused himself from reviewing, scoring, commenting, and voting on the following projects:

- The Story of Us: The Women Who Shaped Montana
- 'The Write Question' a Montana Public Radio program and podcast
- Montana Media Lab's Threatened podcast

Jeremy Carl noted that he only had time to review a few of the film + video proposals. Therefore, he abstained from voting on: The Story of Us, Unearthed, USS Montana, Connecting the Grizzly, and "Why Should I Care?".

Grants Committee Discussion

Grants Manager Megan Sundry provided a brief overview of the YTD grantmaking budget and funds available for award decisions through October 31, 2023. Committee Chair Jennifer Corning facilitated discussions of grant applications by type (film + video requests, regular request) and then by overall rating and funding availability.

Total number of applications reviewed by board members = 21

Sum of funds requested from all applications = \$161,076

Estimated remaining funds in HM's FY23 grantmaking budget available = \$70,705

The committee considered the following film + video grant applications:

Film + Video grant applications (10 received, \$89,500 requested)

- The Story of Us: The Women Who Shaped Montana, The Extreme History Project
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 93.8%* - 3 in favor, 2 abstentions
- Stars & Stories: Northern Cheyenne, the Morning Star People, Montana State University Billings
\$5,500 - *Weighted Score: 92.5%* - 5 in favor
- USS Montana Documentary project, USS Montana Committee, Inc.
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 88.3%* - 4 in favor, 1 abstention
- Unearthed: Native Peoples' Ancient Lives Revealed in the Greater Yellowstone, Documentary Educational Resources
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 87.2%* - 4 in favor, 1 abstention

- Connecting the Grizzly, International League of Conservation Photographers
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 80.6% - 3 in favor, 1 dissenter, 1 abstention*
- Clara Boone, MINT Film MT
\$8,000 - *Weighted Score: 78.2% - Not discussed*
- Documentary Film “Why Should I Care?” The Homeless in Helena, Hands On Global, Inc.
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 70.6% - Not discussed*
- Taking the Reins, Center for Independent Documentary, Inc.
\$8,000 - *Weighted Score: 65.2% - Not discussed*
- Climate Aid: Voices of the Forest, The Montana Project
\$8,000 - *Weighted Score: 59.9% - Not discussed*
- “Mother Range: Rearing Hope in America’s Livestock Industry,” AERO
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 59.9% - Not discussed*

Jeremy Carl raised concerns about the future implications of the recent Supreme Court ruling on Affirmative Action rules and regulations for Humanities Montana’s grantmaking. Executive Director Jill Baker shared that this issue has been raised with NEH and in collaboration with the Federation of State Humanities Council and executive directors from state councils across the country, risk management strategies will be identified. Additionally, Carla Homstad stated that priority communities were approved by the board in the most recent strategic planning process and requested this conversation be continued during the board of director’s next strategic planning session.

The committee shifted the conversation to consider the following regular grant applications:

Regular grant applications (11 received, \$71,576 requested)

- Rocky Mountain Kid Lit Festival, Billings Public Library
\$3,500 - *Weighted Score: 97.2% - 5 in favor*
- Montana Media Lab’s Threatened Podcast, University of Montana
\$11,000 - *Weighted Score: 91.2% - 4 in favor, 1 abstention*
- Native Filmmaker Initiative (NFI) Film Club, Big Sky Film Institute
\$5,000 - *Weighted Score: 90.7% - 5 in favor*
- New Songs for the Butte Mining Camp Essay Book, The Clark Chateau
\$5,000 - *Weighted Score: 90.5% - 5 in favor*
- ‘The Write Question’ a Montana Public Radio program and podcast, University of Montana
\$9,999 - *Weighted Score: 90.4% - 4 in favor, 1 abstention*
- Indigenous Heritage Celebration: Language & Art, C.M. Russell Museum
\$4,383 - *Weighted Score: 88.7% - 5 in favor*
- Life in the Land, The Common Ground Project
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 87.2% - 2 in favor, 3 dissenters*

- Norman Maclean Festival presents 'Finding our Place in Nature: The Power of Story', Alpine Artisans, Inc.
\$10,000 - *Weighted Score: 86.4%* - 3 in favor, 2 dissenters
- 3rd Annual Winter Lodge Rendezvous, Montana Playwrights Network
\$2,275 - *Weighted Score: 86.1%* - *Suggestion to reconsider for a \$2,000 mini-grant in November 2023*
- 5 in favor
- Expert Lecture Series and Publication for WITHIN: Louis Still-Smoking and Josh Isaiah, Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art
\$5,419 - *Weighted Score: 85.9%* - 1 in favor, 4 dissenters
- The Centering Indigenous Knowledge Series, University of Montana
\$5,000 - *Weighted Score: 77.1%* - *Not discussed*

After initial discussions of each application, the committee assessed award amounts for each project in relation to the amount requested, available funding, and organizational priorities. The committee also aligned the funding amounts for repeat projects based on the regranting guidelines which states that funding request be at equal or lesser amounts than the previous award.

As the committee considered partial funding for projects, Jill Baker and Megan Sundy encouraged committee members to consider the project scope and overall project budget when determining partial funding amounts. Partially funded projects require staff and applicants to revise project budgets and, in some cases, make significant changes to the project activities and timelines. Jill and Megan reviewed budgets for projects being considered for partial funding and provided feedback to the committee as needed to determine award amounts for this funding cycle.

Based on this discussion, the committee recommends the following award decisions to the full board...

FULL FUNDING (6 PROJECTS)

- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, The Story of Us: The Women Who Shaped Montana, The Extreme History Project
- FILM + VIDEO - \$5,500, Stars & Stories: Northern Cheyenne, the Morning Star People, Montana State University Billings
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, USS Montana Documentary project, USS Montana Committee, Inc.
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, Connecting the Grizzly, International League of Conservation Photographers
- REGULAR - \$5,000, New Songs for the Butte Mining Camp Essay Book, The Clark Chateau
- REGULAR - \$4,383, Indigenous Heritage Celebration: Language & Art, C.M. Russell Museum

PARTIAL FUNDING (6 PROJECTS)

- FILM + VIDEO - \$5,000, Unearthed: Native Peoples' Ancient Lives Revealed in the Greater Yellowstone, Documentary Educational Resources
- REGULAR - \$3,000, Rocky Mountain Kid Lit Festival, Billings Public Library
- REGULAR - \$5,000, Montana Media Lab's Threatened Podcast, University of Montana
- REGULAR - \$4,000, Native Filmmaker Initiative (NFI) Film Club, Big Sky Film Institute
- REGULAR - \$4,000, 'The Write Question' a Montana Public Radio program and podcast, University of Montana

- REGULAR - \$5,000, Norman Maclean Festival presents 'Finding our Place in Nature: The Power of Story', Alpine Artisans, Inc.

DECLINE FUNDING (9 PROJECTS)

- FILM + VIDEO - \$8,000, Clara Boone, MINT Film MT
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, "Mother Range: Rearing Hope in America's Livestock Industry," AERO
- FILM + VIDEO - \$10,000, Documentary Film "Why Should I Care?" The Homeless in Helena, Hands On Global, Inc.
- FILM + VIDEO - \$8,000, Taking the Reins, Center for Independent Documentary, Inc.
- FILM + VIDEO - \$8,000, Climate Aid: Voices of the Forest, The Montana Project
- REGULAR - \$10,000, Life in the Land, The Common Ground Project
- REGULAR - \$2,275, 3rd Annual Winter Lodge Rendezvous, Montana Playwrights Network
- REGULAR - \$5,419, Expert Lecture Series and Publication for WITHIN: Louis Still-Smoking and Josh Isaiah, Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art
- REGULAR - \$5,000, The Centering Indigenous Knowledge Series, University of Montana

Staff will consult with The Montana Playwrights Network and ask them to consider reapplying for a mini-grant in November 2023.

Jennifer Corning asked the committee for final thoughts and comments before voting on award recommendations to be presented at the September board meeting in Polson.

The committee voted unanimously in favor of presenting the award recommendations to the full board next week.

TOTAL RECOMMENDED AWARD: \$70,883.00

Carla Homstad suggested the committee consider options for moving Film + Video applications into a separate grant cycle in the future. Grants Manager Megan Sundy presented the April cycle as the most viable option and noted that it would take significant planning to facilitate this transition.

The meeting adjourned at 12:37 PM. MJHS