HUMANITIES MONTANA
NOTES FROM SMALL GROUP CONVERSATIONS
Carroll College, Helena, MT
May 31, 2025

Board members were asked what their greatest concerns or questions are at this time. Responses included:

Dave:
1. The Program Downsizing Recs
2. What our core program <u>focus</u> will be
3. Democracy Project—Books
4. Core Programs

Clark:
1. What is it about the subject matter/structure/operations of the Democracy Project that allowed it to survive the purge?
2. Who can HM join with besides the other organizations deeply damaged by state/federal governments.

Linda:
1. How can we continue to fund projects statewide with limited staff & funding to gain social media, press & local attention about our continued existence?

Beth:
1. What is HM apart from NEH?
2. What distinct or unique purpose can HM serve in MT <u>for Humanities</u> and MT communities?

Jen:
1. Specific goals/scope for next 6 months and year.
2. A budget
3. Revised job description for Jill and Jenny
4. More info about ND collaboration
5. What can the board do to help Jill?
6. Committee responsibilities

Jeannette:
1. Composition of the Board / roles of the Board (very specific)
2. How, even with limited programs, do we tell our story?
3. Narrative (story) for fundraising
4. If/when funding grows, how do we prioritize which services to bring back?
5. Support for staff
6. Do we need to rethink our offerings?

Jill:
1. If/when federal funding ends—permanently—who will we be? Who will we serve? How? (audiences)
2. What are the core programs & services that HM will continue moving forward

Tim:
1. I'd like to learn what the "other 55" councils are doing, i.e. Can we learn from them, or them from us.
2. What we are going to do to raise awareness and appreciation.

Others:
1. How much funding do we "need" yearly

2. Our direction focus plan for the next 2-3years
3. Where do we go from here?
4. How can we identify other funding sources?
5. How do we grow our private donor base?
6. What is the best way to stay in front of the public?

The board was asked to keep the following points in mind as conversations continued.
- Core programs: models, books
- Role of the Board & Structure
- Budget/Grantmaking
- Structure/Benchmarks
- How much funding is needed?
- Marketing/Promotions
- Communication
- What is HM apart from the NEH
- Priorities for the next 6 months to year

Discussions captured additional thoughts.

GOVERNANCE
- Board Size
  - Too big??
  - Not aligned with strategic plan
- Change board/background duties
- Better define
- Board size
- Change to board backgrounds
- Better define board member roles for better buy-in

- Balance the board--$$ vs. humanities background
- Vetting process for board members
- Accountability
- More "togetherness"—more virtual meetings
- Face-to-face meetings in central location(s)

COMMUNICATIONS
- Communicate successes while advocating overcoming challenges
- Take advantage of social media to promote HMs-related activities
- Stakeholders/partners invited to join in promotions

- Federation:
  - Set up "clearinghouse" of ideas that are opportunities
  - Workshops on that are working

PROGRAMS
- Humanities-Based MT Specific
- Democracy Project
- Center for the Book → MT Poet Laureate
- Mini Grants
- North Dakota Program—virtual
- Virtual Re-runs:
  - Social media pushes
  - Promoted by board members, etc.

  - Available at Home or Libraries
- Publishing partnerships
- Benchmark: our place in MT in larger conversations (world, national, regional) → bigger field programs
- ✳ Keep mini grants suspended—grant-making creates a problem for fundraising

FINANCE

- Assume NO NEH $$
- Plan in a way that allows for taking $$
- Maintain full-time ED: nothing works without Jill
- Board staffing needs to meet 2 needs: humanities & funding
- Identify primary operating expenses: find grants to fund them

Summary

After sharing synopsis of the groups' conversations, the following priorities were identified:

GOVERNANCE

- Identifying & recruiting candidates
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Structure
- Priorities:
  - 6 months
  - 1 year

PROGRAMS

- Models, books, structure, benchmarks
- Grantmaking
- Priorities:
  - 6 months
  - 1 year

COMMUNICATIONS

- Marketing
- Promotions
- Priorities:
  - 6 months
  - 1 year

FINANCE

- Budget
  - FY 2026
  - FY 2027
  - Beyond
- Priorities:
  - 6 months
  - 1 year

Submitted by M. Hernandez