



Connecting California Grants

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

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PROGRAM PURPOSE

1. What is the purpose of the Connecting California grant program?

The goal of the program is to bring people in California into closer connection—across differences in culture, age, geography, race, gender, faith, politics, work, values, ideas, and lived experience—to build more trust, empathy, respect, and a sense of community.

2. Why is California Humanities offering this grant program?

California Humanities is offering this grant program to advance our program strategy, **What We Share: Culture. Community. California—Connection**, our program strategy for strengthening communities across the state. Through this work, we support projects that cultivate cultural expression, build community across difference, and foster connections as a pathway to empathy, critical thinking, and belonging—core conditions for a healthy democracy and a thriving California.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

3. Who can apply to this program?

Organizations based in California that are nonprofits with federal 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status can apply. Nonprofits must be in good standing with the IRS, the State of CA, and California Humanities in order to be eligible (see more information on what “good standing” means below). California-based public entities—such as libraries, municipalities, schools, colleges, universities, and tribal governments—are also eligible to apply.

Though not a requirement, California Humanities encourages the following kinds of organizations to apply:

- those with budgets of \$500,000 or less
- in rural areas or places where there are few resources for nonprofits
- that have never been funded by California Humanities

in order to make our funding more accessible across all parts of the state.

4. What does it mean to be “in good standing”?

Nonprofits must be in good standing with the IRS, the State of CA, and California Humanities in order to be eligible to receive a grant from California Humanities.

To be in good standing with the IRS means the organization complies with the legal requirements for maintaining its federal tax-exempt status. Before applying, please check your status with the IRS here: <https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/>

To be in good standing with the State of California means the organization complies with the legal requirements of the State (such as being up-to-date with annual tax filings and reporting). Before applying please check your status with the Secretary of State here: <https://bizfileonline.sos.ca.gov/search/business> and with the Attorney General Registry of Charities and Fundraisers here: <https://rct.doj.ca.gov/Verification/Web/Search.aspx?facility=Y>

To be in good standing with California Humanities, in addition to the above, the organization must have no outstanding or unapproved grant reports or other documentation for any previous grant.

5. Can I apply if I'm part of a group without nonprofit status but with a great idea?

Groups without nonprofit status may apply only through a fiscal sponsor whose mission aligns with their project idea. A fiscal sponsor must be a California-based nonprofit with federal tax-exempt status in good standing, as explained above. [Here](#) is some general information about working with a fiscal sponsor.

6. What does a fiscal sponsor do if we need to work with one?

A fiscal sponsor, at minimum, takes responsibility for administering the grant on behalf of the sponsored entity (the group carrying out the project), and must meet all eligibility criteria of the grant program. If your organization needs to apply through a nonprofit fiscal sponsor, that sponsor will be the official applicant for the grant and will receive the funding if an award is made. Your organization will be the “project organization,” that is, the organization that carries out the project and will receive funds, if granted, from your fiscal sponsor. The fiscal sponsor carries the main financial responsibility for the project, which is why it is important that both you and your fiscal sponsor have a written agreement about your respective responsibilities to each other.

A fiscally-sponsored application must include a document, such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), that outlines the responsibilities and agreements between the fiscal sponsor and sponsored entity, ensuring the smooth administration of the project and compliant management of the California Humanities award. For more general information about fiscal sponsors, click [here](#).

7. Do you have an example of an MOU I can use as a template?

A sample MOU is linked [here](#) for ideas about your specific roles and responsibilities. Please modify the template to suit your particular needs.

8. What are the responsibilities of an applicant organization that are different from a fiscal sponsor?

Both an applicant organization applying on its own behalf and a fiscal sponsor applying on behalf of the sponsored entity must: approve the submission of the proposal, be willing and able to administer grant funds in compliance with the terms of the grant agreement, and accept full responsibility for undertaking and supporting the project as outlined in the proposal.

If a grant is awarded, the authorizing official (often the executive director or board chair) of the nonprofit applicant organization or the fiscal sponsor will receive the award packet and must sign the grant agreement and any other required award documents before any funds can be disbursed. The applicant organization, or a fiscal sponsor if used, is the entity with overall and final accountability to California Humanities for the project. If an organization without nonprofit status is working with a fiscal sponsor to obtain funding, the fiscal sponsor has ultimate fiscal and compliance responsibilities for the project and should have a clear agreement (such as a memorandum of understanding) with the sponsored entity to ensure accountability. The organization being sponsored will have the primary responsibility of carrying out the proposed project and reporting on the results and learning.

9. Are Individuals allowed to apply for this grant?

No. Only nonprofit organizations or groups without nonprofit status that are fiscally sponsored by a nonprofit may apply.

PROJECT INFORMATION

10. What types of projects are appropriate for a Connecting California Grant?

The types of projects appropriate for this program's grants are mostly limited to one's imagination for connecting people across difference in thoughtful ways. But here are some guiding principles for the eligible projects:

- Open and accessible to members of the general public
- Open and respectful discussions of ideas important to Californians
- Activities/events that involve a variety of points of view and life experiences
- Promote greater understanding and connection among people and invite reflection and even-handed participation
- Align with the California Humanities mission: To connect Californians to ideas and one another in order to understand our shared heritage and diverse cultures, inspire civic participation, and shape our future.

Appropriate project formats include, but are not limited to:

- Themed storytelling events that include public discussions of the ideas raised
- Events that can surface both how we are different and what we share, such as through a hands-on traditional art workshop or a creatively facilitated discussion
- Book-, exhibit-, performance-, or film-inspired discussion events that explore the historical and/or cultural context of the work and how its significance can be different for different people
- Intergenerational activities that bring youth and seniors together to learn about the games they love and why
- Walking tours that uncover little-known histories of one's own neighborhood, followed by a discussion and potluck
- A cultural exchange event to share wise sayings in different languages and why they are important

11. Is there a time limit for completing my project?

Yes. These grants are meant to support small, short-term projects. If projects depend on funds from this program, they should not begin before a signed grant agreement is submitted and must be completed within 12 months of the notification of the grant award. Extensions will not be granted.

12. Is my project required to have in-person programming?

Programming may be presented virtually, in person, or in hybrid formats (both virtual and in person); however, projects should demonstrate that they will provide robust public engagement opportunities with minimal barriers to access, whether online or in person. A key requirement for all eligible projects is to engage the public as participants, not merely audience members.

BUDGET & GRANT INFORMATION

13. How big a grant can I apply for?

Grant requests can range from \$1,000 to \$5,000. All grant requests must be matched one-to-one (1:1) by non-federal sources (for example, not from the NEA, NEH, IMLS, LSTA, Head Start, etc.). The match must be secured before the end of the grant period. A grant request must be no more than half the total project costs. For example, if you want to request \$2,000 from this program, your project must have a total budget of at least \$4,000.

14. What does it mean that grant funds have to be matched 1:1?

In this grant program, for every grant dollar you receive, there must be an amount of equal value (or more) that will be secured from non-federal sources that will support the project. The match could be in cash or in-kind, or a combination of the two. So, the project should cost at least twice the requested grant amount.

15. What is the difference between a cash and an in-kind contribution?

A cash contribution can come from individuals, foundations, or non-federal public agencies (for example, a city or state entity).

An in-kind contribution can be any donation of labor, materials, goods, or services to the project. It can include staff-salaried time; volunteer hours; office space; use of equipment for administrative or programmatic purposes; materials donated for publicity, promotion, or evaluation; public program items, including refreshments; and travel, lodging, and meals for project staff or participants. Please note: Applicants are expected to determine the fair-market value of in-kind contributions.

16. Do I have to have the 1:1 match secured before I apply for this grant or receive grant funds?

No. You can apply for and receive grant funds, if awarded, before making the match. However, you must have secured the match by the end of the project period, which is no more than one year from the time of the award notification.

17. Can the project budget be more than twice the grant request?

Yes. There is no formal limit on the project budget, though Connecting California grants are intended for smaller-scale projects.

18. When can an applicant expect to receive funding if awarded a grant?

Grant funds are paid in full within 30 days after receipt of a signed grant agreement.

19. What costs are eligible for support from this grant?

Eligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Project-related programmatic and administrative staff salaries and fringe benefits
- Professional fees, including honoraria and stipends for speakers/presenters, advisors, interviewees, artists, photographers/videographers, etc.
- Programming expenses, including venue or equipment rental, refreshments (no alcohol), travel, and per diems (aligned with IRS allowable reimbursement rates)
- Supplies and materials for program activities
- Marketing expenses, such as design of announcements or flyers, ad placement, printing, and mailing
- Fiscal sponsorship or indirect administrative fees (only up to 10% of the grant request)

However, funds may not be used to advance political agendas or candidates.

APPLICANT SUPPORT

20. Does California Humanities conduct application information meetings or workshops?

Yes. A recording of an application webinar will be posted on the Connecting California Grant webpage by Friday, February 6, 2026. Applicants can contact staff with questions.

21. Is the grant application form available to view online?

Yes. Applicants can download a PDF of the grant application form and proposal questions on the Connecting California Grant [webpage \(https://calhum.org/connecting-california-quick-grants/\)](https://calhum.org/connecting-california-quick-grants/).

SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

22. When can I apply?

There are multiple deadlines for Connecting California grant applications. Please visit the program [webpage \(https://calhum.org/connecting-california-quick-grants/\)](https://calhum.org/connecting-california-quick-grants/) to find the appropriate deadline. Public programming should not begin before a signed grant agreement has been submitted. Programming must occur within 12 months of the award notification and cannot exceed this time limit.

23. Must I submit an electronic application?

Yes. An applicant must submit an online grant application form and attach the required documents as outlined in the guidelines and application instructions. Submit your application: <https://ch-grants.smapply.io/prog/>

24. How do I submit my project's proposal narrative and project budget?

Proposal narratives, project budgets, and other required information must be submitted through the online application forms. Please review all program documents on the program [webpage \(https://calhum.org/connecting-california-quick-grants/\)](https://calhum.org/connecting-california-quick-grants/) to prepare to submit an online application.

The Narrative: Word counts are listed in the proposal narrative questions. We recommend that applicants refrain from restating the proposal prompts and from including extraneous information beyond the parameters of what is asked for in the narrative questions. Supporting documents are not required.

The Budget: A simple fill-in budget form is also included in the application. Budget uploads are not necessary. Not all fields may apply to your project; however any line items that are blank need to have a zero placed in them. Please note that all expenses should be estimated as accurately as possible and align with information provided elsewhere in the application.

25. Can I personally deliver an application to California Humanities?

No. Applications must be submitted online at https://ch-grants.smapply.io/connecting_california.

26. Must I finish my application in one sitting?

No. The online grant portal allows you to save and continue working on your application throughout the application period.

The amount of time needed to develop your proposal narrative and budget will vary from project to project. Be sure to factor in time to obtain any necessary approvals and to craft your proposal narrative and budget.

In addition to preparing these materials, you will need to complete an online application form. The form requires you to provide information about the project, the applicant organization, the primary project contact, and the fiscal sponsor, if applicable. The online application must also be approved by an authorizing official.

Please save a copy of your final application materials before submitting your application for your records and in case of technical difficulties with the platform.

27. How will I know that my application was received?

Successfully completed applications will show “Submitted!” onscreen. If you do not see “Submitted!” onscreen, your application was not officially submitted. Applicants will also be notified by email of the receipt of their application.

28. How do I enter the grant portal? What if I cannot log in to the grant portal?

If you have not accessed the California Humanities Grant Portal since May 1, 2025, you will not have an active account on the portal. Use the green Register button to create an account. Be sure to use the links provided in the portal emails sent from noreply@smapply.io.

29. What if I have reset my password but continue to receive an error?

Note: your account may not have been activated on the California Humanities grant portal. Because SurveyMonkeyApply allows you to use one email address on multiple grant portals, your account may not be active with California Humanities. Please follow the prompts in the email sent from the portal to noreply@smapply.io. If you have any issues resetting your password after following these steps, please contact Elisa Kutza, Grants Manager at ekutza@calhum.org.

30. What if I cannot sign the application?

We have noticed that some web browsers work better with the SurveyMonkeyApply grant portal than others. Unfortunately, this software does not support Internet

Explorer. For best results, we recommend using Google Chrome. If you have any issues, please contact Elisa Kutza, Grants Manager at ekutza@calhum.org.

REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

31. How are applications reviewed?

Applications are evaluated by the California Humanities team for eligibility, completeness, and competitiveness based on the criteria listed below:

- Clarity and significance of project purpose (3 points)
- Alignment of planned activities with the goals of the project, and the purpose and requirements of the Connecting California program (3 points)
- Capacity and knowledge to successfully carry out the proposed project (3 points)
- Reaching underserved areas and communities (This is not a program requirement, but has weight in the evaluation of applications.) (1 bonus point)

Please note:

Applications will be reviewed based on the criteria above. Obvious typos, misspellings, mistakes in grammar, and the like will not be taken into account (unless they obscure meaning).

In addition to evaluating the merits of each application, the overall need to cover a variety of populations and geographies of the state will be taken into consideration.

32. When will awards be announced?

Notification of award decisions will be sent to all applicants by email approximately two months after the grant deadline. See Connecting California Grant Guidelines and [webpage \(https://calhum.org/connecting-california-quick-grants/\)](https://calhum.org/connecting-california-quick-grants/) for details.

33. If my application is unsuccessful, may I reapply?

Yes, subject to other conditions and eligibility requirements. Applicants are eligible to reapply for a Connecting California grant following an official declination notice for a previously submitted application. Applicants are encouraged to request email feedback on previously submitted applications before reapplying.

Please be sure to save a copy of your final application materials before submitting. Declined applications will be removed from the online platform. Applicants must start a new application if they wish to reapply.

34. If funded, what are your grant requirements?

California Humanities requires grantees to do the following:

Use the California Humanities logo and acknowledgement language on any tangible product of grant activity (film/video/audio productions, websites, public reports, etc.). Grantees must credit California Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and other funders outlined in the grant agreement.

- Submit a signed grant agreement by the authorizing official of the grantee organization
- Provide updated information on public programs and events as requested
- Comply with all requirements in the grant agreement.
- Please note that failure to comply will result in disqualification from future grant applications.

35. How can I get answers to other application questions?

Use this [Google Form](#) to submit other questions you may have. Please allow at least 48 hours for a response.