

**General Operating Grant
Final Report
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for the
Legislative Reference Library**



Minnesota
Humanities
Center

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**MINNESOTA HUMANITIES CENTER
REPORT TO THE MN STATE LEGISLATURE
JULY 1, 2024- JUNE 30, 2025**

Programs and Activities

Education:

Through partnerships with students, educators, and communities, the Minnesota Humanities Center is working to ensure an empowering educational experience for all learners — and that educators are equipped to develop classrooms where every student can thrive.

Schools are where students begin to explore who they are, examine the world around them, and develop the critical thinking and civic understanding needed for meaningful participation in community life. A well-educated population is vital to the health, safety, economic prosperity, and longevity of our society.

Our programs work at both the system and classroom levels, reimagining what inclusive, culturally grounded education can look like — from district leadership to everyday instruction. Our priorities shape the programs we build with districts, schools, and communities across Minnesota. From multi-session institutes to customized support, we design inclusive, culturally rich learning experiences that meet the unique needs of educators, classrooms, and learners.

During FY 2025, Minnesota Humanities Center partnered with numerous school districts across the state to bring history alive in the classroom through immersive learning and social studies curriculum development.

These include partnerships with local foundations and the Minneapolis Public School District. Local teachers interactively experienced history with a trip to Alabama to see the historic sites and stories of history with local scholars and participants in history.

A partnership was developed between Intermediate School District 917, Metro State University, and PELSB (Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board), developing a program series provided free of cost through a year-long program designed to engage participants in navigating education systems with resilience and reimagination.

Also, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), University of Minnesota Duluth – Tribal Sovereignty Institute, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation – Tribal State Relations Training, offered training designed in collaboration with Tribal Nations and the urban American Indian community in Minnesota. These training programs were specifically tailored for school district administrators, staff, school board members, and educators to enhance their understanding and engagement with Native learners and families.

Teaching Bdote: Tools for Teaching Dakota Content was offered in collaboration with Saint Paul Public Schools and addressed the concerns and anxieties that non-Indigenous educators may have around teaching Dakota history. Educators were left with new resources and content, a deeper understanding, and ideas for how to lead a Bdote trip or to bring the experience into the classroom. Teaching Bdote was facilitated and presented by Ramona Kitto Stately, Ethan Neerdaels, and the Saint Paul Public Schools Office of Teaching and Learning.

In collaboration with the National Endowment for the Humanities, National History Day presents historical content in ways that honor and respect diverse communities. Minnesota Humanities Center, in partnership with the Minnesota Historical Society, designed this event for 6-12th grade educators. This session spotlighted Minnesota's Indigenous communities, featuring an update from the Minnesota Department of Education on the recently passed Indigenous Education for All legislation, a presentation from the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition on the history and legacy of residential boarding schools, an introduction to National History Day by the Minnesota Historical Society, and a curated overview of high-quality educator resources. Educators gained practical strategies and resources to guide students in creating projects with honor, respect, and cultural sensitivity.

Immersive Experiences:

Through collaboration with individuals, community organizations, artists, elders, academic scholars, and institutions, we create authentic, community-centric immersive programming to amplify the voices and histories of Minnesota.

Engaging immersive experiences allows us to tap into the curiosity within all of us to learn. Research indicates that people who participate in experiential learning are better able to retain information and demonstrate improved problem-solving skills. Learning through immersive experiences also aids in the development of soft skills such as teamwork, empathy, and adaptability.

Sharing stories from communities throughout the state allows us to create space for us to reimagine different approaches and solutions to our present challenges. We bring intentional effort to ensure that our collaborations are authentic and represent all the voices of our youth, artists, elders, and leaders throughout the state. When the context is properly understood by examining our past, we have an opportunity to create a stronger and more unified society.

We co-create immersive programming to connect across differences. Some immersive experiences are for a general audience, while others are curated specifically for educators, groups, organizations, or corporate teams.

These included Headscarf Story, a series that recognizes the strength and resiliency of women.

The Nibi Walk featured the Nibi Walk and its healing connectedness to women, and was an immersive experience guided by Sharon Day, leader of Nibi Walks and Executive Director of the Indigenous People's Task Force.

Health and Humanities – Reaching Women Across Minnesota. This experience was focused on health and humanities. Women talked about menopause and heard from experts in women's health, and had a chance to share their own stories of experiences, fears, and remedies

Also, in collaboration with Hmong Women Achieving Together (HWAT), the Minnesota Humanities Center hosted From Mountains to Lakes: Stories of Hmong Women. The event was held to help recognize the perseverance and contributions of Hmong women in Minnesota since arriving in the US nearly 50 years ago. The event included several intergenerational listening groups to identify stories and themes that are critical for community growth and ongoing resiliency.

Feeding Our Souls: The Essence of Joy, collaborating with local partners, utilizing food to share about community and the stories of Minnesota.

Feeding Our Souls: The Essence of Latine Joy:

Savory entrees and delectable desserts filled the tables at the Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC) as we commemorated Latine Cultural Heritage Month through food and the beloved stories behind them that bring community joy. Cuisine and entertainment were showcased by some of the Twin Cities' finest chefs and musicians, including Manuel Gonzalez, Jesus Guzman, and Melissa Gonzalez Vazquez.

Feeding Our Souls: Essence of Indigenous Joy

Splendid traditional entrees and desserts evolve at the Minnesota Humanities Center as we commemorate Indigenous Cultural Heritage Month through food and the beloved stories behind them that bring community joy. Cuisine and authentic presentations are showcased by Twin Cities' finest chefs, food historians, and musicians, including Brian Yazzie aka Yazzie the Chef (Diné/Navajo), Danielle Polk (Hoonmana Polk), and Deanna Standing Cloud.

Minnesota Humanities Center also held Shifting Power, Transforming Systems Through Language, presented by the University of St. Thomas Morrison Family College of Health in partnership with the Minnesota Humanities Center. This series was filled with conversation on language as a vital bridge to care for communities in which language is a barrier.

Finally, learning from the Place Bdote program continued for FY 2025, hosting more than 20+ private and public experiences, giving participants a glimpse into the history of Minnesota.

Public Programming:

At large and small public events throughout Minnesota, we showcase storytelling and writing, encourage personal reflection, and convene critical conversations to help Minnesotans examine the common and unique experience of being human through some of the most pressing and difficult issues in society.

The humanities help us recognize and appreciate the many dimensions of our lives and the examples of excellence within our society.

A strong society values all people and honors their stories to achieve a better understanding of its past, improve navigation of its present, and shape its future. By fostering a climate of imagination, inquiry, and open dialogue, we cultivate a vibrant and thriving democracy strengthened by the wisdom of its people.

The impact of the humanities on people and society is life-changing and transformational. In partnering with individuals, creatives, scholars, organizations and institutions to co-create accessible humanities programming, we offer a range of opportunities to deepen our collective understanding of ourselves, our communities, and our histories.

For FY25, these included partnering with Classical Actors Ensemble to celebrate the 10th season of Shakespeare in Our Parks held on MHC's lawn as we cheered, laughed, and swooned at this year's production of "Twelfth Night, or What You Will."

The Minnesota Humanities Center held various book series, highlighting local authors, including local authors Dr. Artika Tyner, Ty Chapman, Monica Rojas, Dr. Christopher P. Lehman, Marcie Rendon, Tia-Simone Gardner, Erin Sharkey, and Tarik Dobbs.

In addition, the Minnesota Humanities Center celebrated Poetry with Latino Poetry: “Places We Call Home with poets Ray Gonzalez and Lupe Castillo. At another event, students from Rochester Public Schools read poems from the recently released anthology, “Latino Poetry: The Library of America Anthology,” as well as their original work, and the event was emceed by City of Rochester Poet Laureate Jean Prokott. Finally, the Minnesota Humanities Center celebrated National Poetry Month with the Poet Laureate of Northfield, Russ Paladin, and the Minnesota Poet Laureate, Gwen Nell Westerman! Russ and Gwen will come together for an interactive event that includes poetry readings, a conversation on craft and inspiration, and writing – with a focus on the poetic form of tanka.

The Minnesota Humanities Center continued its work with veterans with “Reflections on War and Service at the Capitol Mall,” which provided participants an opportunity to reflect on the experiences and perspectives of service members, veterans, and civilians in how they understand the nature of military conflicts, and how the public remembers and interprets the experience of war and service through memorials and monuments. In addition, a series with NEH Examining Military Service from the Margin was held across the State, examining similar themes.

The Minnesota Humanities Center also partnered with the Duluth Art Institute (DAI) to host a first-of-its-kind artist residency in Minnesota. “Take Me Where There Is Life” is an art project and workshop with Spanish artist Carmen La Griega that connects, facilitates, and co-creates with community members through art therapy and artistic practice with a focus on those experiencing memory loss. Workshop participants were people living with Alzheimer’s and dementia and their caregivers. Carmen’s instruction and approach to the workshop use lessons that she learned and developed while creating art with her father, who lived with Alzheimer’s in the later stages of his life.

Civic Renewal

The strength of our democracy and state of our union is dependent on developing the skills and increasing the desire of people to work with other people, institutions, and governmental entities to build a better society for all. We foster this individual and community skill-building by leveraging the humanities in partnership with educational institutions, community organizations, and governmental entities.

“Democracy demands the wisdom of its citizens,” as stated in the enabling legislation of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). MHC, as an affiliate of the NEH, was created to sustain and enhance our Democracy. In order to create a vibrant and peaceful democracy, we must get to know each other, work together, and support institutions that support the common good. Humanities help us understand the histories, motivations, concerns, values of others while also giving us the tools to navigate institutions and entities that impact our lives.

We strengthen our society and bolster our democracy by building the capacity of people to engage in thoughtful dialogue on issues of importance to them, work toward common goals with their neighbors, and influence the institutions that impact their lives.

Our priorities inform the initiatives and event offerings we co-create with partners. As issues of importance to the public are not static and understanding of all issues are not uniform, our civic renewal offerings are developed to meet the needs of today in a manner that broadly helps develop skills.

During FY 2025, we finished our first annual statewide program called *Sketches of Minnesota*. A collaboration with the improv-comedy troupe Danger Boat Productions, Sketches uses laughter and comedy to celebrate Minnesota communities, promote dialogue, bridge divides, and help neighbors find ways to work constructively across differences. Working with local community partners as performance hosts, each event began with a meal and a dinner-table conversation facilitated by MHC's Civic Renewal Team, focused on participants' answers to four questions: what makes your town great; what do you think people get wrong about it; what local divisions concern you; and what future do you imagine? After listening in on these conversations, the Danger Boat improv troupe brought the stories to life on stage through unscripted improv comedy theater. At the end of the first year, Sketches traveled around the state to ten communities, including St. Paul, Winona, Duluth, Waite Park, Emily, Little Falls, Morris, Austin, and International Falls.

The Minnesota Humanities Center continued our work in higher education through our Third Way Civics (3WC) initiative. This effort to infuse civic purpose and skills-building into undergraduate students' everyday classroom learning continued to expand during the academic year, including pilot courses in colleges and universities across Minnesota (including Minnesota State University, MSU-Mankato, the University of St. Thomas, and Winona State University), as well as in Florida, Indiana, and Missouri.

A third major initiative accounting for a large share of our Civic Renewal work was our long running *We Are Water Minnesota* traveling exhibit. This program is a partnership with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and receives additional support from multiple state agencies, the Minnesota History Center, and the University of Minnesota. *We Are Water Minnesota* works with local communities to promote scientific, historical, and cultural understanding of water in ways that increase mutual understanding across differences and equip communities to imagine and achieve better water futures together. During the period under review, *We Are Water MN* was hosted by community partners in Cass Lake, Shakopee, Ortonville, Ely, and Minneapolis.

The balance of our Civic Renewal work was devoted to supporting hosts of another long-running traveling exhibit, *Why Treaties Matter*, which conveys the history and importance of tribal self-governance in Minnesota, aiding our partners at the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council in organizing and hosting the fourth annual Dakota and Ojibwe Language Revitalization Conference.

Event Center: the Minnesota Humanities Center operates a full-service Event Center from its building that offers flexible meetings spaces, which accommodate groups of five to 150, has onsite catering, and 15 overnight guest rooms. the Minnesota Humanities Center hosts many educational and community events that complement our programmatic work, reinforcing the Minnesota Humanities Center as a place where people convene, strengthen connections, and participate in meaningful dialogues. MHC's presence strengthens Saint Paul, the state's capitol city, as one the only retreat centers in the city and provides a space for groups working to improve Minnesota's quality of life, and to design and shape the future.

The Event Center also provides spaces for the Minnesota Humanities Center's own programs and acts as an additional source of rental income. Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, the Event Center hosted around 290 meetings and events, serving over 9,600 people associated with nonprofit organizations, foundations, state agencies, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions. We have a tiered pricing structure, so we can offer partnership discounts for our humanities-based, government, and nonprofit clients. Through this structure we can remain accessible to these groups while still staying competitive in our standard pricing. the Minnesota Humanities Center continues to see a strong tie to our mission-related clients (*organizations that hold their events with us because they support our mission or our mission aligns with theirs*), clearly indicating the need for a place to convene and connect.

Grants: The Minnesota Humanities Center administers and manages grant funds based on state-required policies and by offering resources, advice, and guidance to support projects using Legacy funding. Legacy funding was created to ensure clean water, preserve opportunities for Minnesotans to enjoy nature, parks, and trails, and to appreciate the arts and culture that exists within the State. Three-eighths of one percent of sales tax revenue is dedicated to Clean Water, Land, and Legacy; 19.75% is dedicated to the Arts & Cultural Heritage projects. This current period is the second year of the FY 23-25 biennium. The legislature appropriated approximately \$15,000,000 to the Minnesota Humanities Center during the Legislative biennium that started July 1, 2023. As a comparison, the amount of funding the Minnesota Humanities Center received to make grants this biennium exceeds the total amount of funding the Minnesota Humanities Center has received for grantmaking since the passage of the Legacy Amendment in 2008. Our grant administration has tripled since the 2021-2023 biennium, when the Minnesota Humanities Center administered \$5 million in grant funding.

From July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, the Minnesota Humanities Center successfully announced and administered around 140 grants, totaling \$6,909,787.61, for the following grant opportunities:

- Cultural Heritage Grants (83 grants total) – must also preserve and honor the cultural heritage of MN, provide education and student outreach on cultural diversity, expand development of culturally diverse humanities programming, empower communities in building identity and culture, or amplify the arts, culture, and heritage in MN.
- Emergency Response Grants (4 grants total) – must assist the community in responding to a crisis or major event brought about by violence, strife, intolerance, or hatred.
- Capacity Building Grants (14 grants total)– must assist cultural organizations with grant writing, fundraising, and capacity building.
- Children’s Museum Grants (10 grants total)– the Minnesota Humanities Center administers a Direct Appropriations grant to the Saint Paul Children’s Museum. The Minnesota Humanities Center also received competitive grant dollars for museums to support youth education, develop new exhibits, provide outreach to underserved and diverse communities, and support programming that celebrates cultural diversity.
- Civics Grants (6 grants total) – provide education for youth on law, democracy, government, and/or debate, and support civics education programs.
- Festival Grants (16 grants total) - grants to organizations and local government to support cultural festivals and events throughout Minnesota.
- Direct Appropriations - (8 grants total) to the legislative named grantee.

Minnesota Humanities Center Enabling Legislation

Subdivision 1. Establishment.

The Minnesota Humanities Center, a nonprofit organization, was established to advance the study of the humanities and enhance the work of schools, colleges, and cultural organizations throughout the state.

Subd. 2. Reports.

The Minnesota Humanities Center shall report to the legislature by September 1 of each year on the use of state funds appropriated to the commission. The report shall include an itemized account of the programs and projects supported and the source of money for each. The report shall show actual expenditures for the fiscal year ending the preceding June 30 and proposed expenditures for the fiscal year beginning the preceding July 1.

Subd. 3. **Humanities center.**

- a) The Minnesota Humanities Center may establish a humanities center to ensure balance in public education and in the cultural life of the state, and to improve humanities education through the establishment of two institutes: the Minnesota Institute for Lifelong Learning and the Minnesota Institute for the Advancement of Teaching.
- b) The humanities center may transport people and resources to small towns, rural communities, and urban settings to provide grants, technical assistance, and high-quality educational and cultural programs to schools and community organizations throughout Minnesota.
- c) The Minnesota Institute for the Advancement of Teaching may conduct seminars and other activities for the recognition of the teaching profession and the advancement of teaching in Minnesota.

	State FY23	State FY24	State FY25		Total For Biennium (FY 23-25) Expenses for Funding Period
	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual	FY25 Budget		
<u>Revenue</u>	-				
-	-				
Grant Income State	\$470,000.00				
		\$ 470,000.00	\$470,000.00	-	\$940,000.00
				-	
<u>Expenses</u>	-				
Salaries	\$281,700.00	\$353,064.00	\$395,959.36	-	\$749,023.36
Payroll Related Taxes Federal					\$ -
Mn Unemployment Taxes				-	\$ -
401K Benefits Employee					\$ -
Employee Benefits Insurance	\$56,300.00	\$70,562.67	\$74,040.64		\$144,603.31
Contract Service	\$37,000.00	\$46,373.33			\$46,373.33
Recognition Activities					\$ -
Miscellaneous					\$ -
				-	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$375,000.00	\$470,000.00	\$470,000.00	-	\$940,000.00