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MINNESOTA HUMANITIES CENTER
REPORT TO THE MN STATE LEGISLATURE
JULY 1, 2025- JUNE 30, 2026

Programs and Activities

Education:

Why K-12 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, grounded education can look like — from district leadership to everyday instruction.

Our K-12 Education Program Offerings include

Navigating the World History Eras:

Content, Pedagogy, and Inquiry in the Classroom, presented by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC), is a yearlong professional learning opportunity designed to support educators in implementing Minnesota's 2021 K–12 Academic Standards in Social Studies.

Navigating the U.S. History Eras

Navigating the U.S. History Eras: Content, Pedagogy, and Inquiry in the Classroom, presented by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC), is a yearlong professional learning opportunity supporting implementation of Minnesota's 2021 K–12 Academic Standards in Social Studies.

Native American Lives Series

The Native American Lives Series shares real-life stories of Dakota and Ojibwe leaders, artists, activists, and elders who have been influential for their communities and have shaped Minnesota and the nation. Co-edited by Heid E. Erdrich and Gwen Nell Westerman, this series is ideal for students in grades 4-8.

Supporting Indigenous Education for All

The Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC) works to ensure all Minnesota students have access to accurate, respectful, and meaningful learning about Indigenous histories, cultures, and contemporary lives. We collaborate with Tribal Nations, educators, and national partners to integrate Native perspectives into classrooms year-round.

Turning Civic Learning into Action

The Minnesota Humanities Center administers programs that help students build knowledge around the Constitution, civics, and public policy. MHC is the state's coordinator for Project Citizen and We the People, two civic education programs led by the National Center for Civic Education. Together, these programs provide wraparound support for educators, including textbooks, free professional development, and project-based learning for K–12 classrooms.

Social Studies Education

We work with educators across Minnesota to make social studies engaging, relevant, and meaningful for students. Through professional learning, resources, and partnerships, we help schools bring the 2021 K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies to life.

Immersive Experiences:

Why 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.

Our Immersive Experiences Program Offerings include

Learning from Place

When you join one of our Learning from Place experiences, you learn in ways that are not available in a library or classroom. Being immersed in new surroundings engages our senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste, allowing us to connect deeply with the vibrant and diverse cultures and histories that make up the tapestry of our state.

Whether you choose to stand on sacred Indigenous ground on a Bdote tour, taste the offerings of a restaurant you have never heard of before, or walk quietly into a house of worship to be enveloped in the peace and tranquility of an unfamiliar religion, our immersive experiences will ground you in history, tradition, and community.

NUESTRO NORTE

Through shared stories, memories, original music, and symbolic scenes, this beautiful cinematic portrait is more than a documentary – it is a love letter to a community, its history, and its future.

NUESTRO NORTE tells stories that defy generational constraints while reflecting on shared strength and resilience, diversity, community investment, and leadership.

Headscarf Story Circle

A series of gatherings that honors the strength and resilience of women while exploring the complex and diverse lived experiences that many face, symbolized by the headscarf. Our theme for this series is Threads of our Rhythm.

Feeding Our Souls

Feeding Our Souls: The Essence of "Hotdish Wisdom" explores the themes of connection and joy through food and community, including students and community centers.

Feeding Our Souls: The Essence of Food and Musical Joy explores the themes of connection and joy through food and music. Through the richness of cuisine, traditional spirituals, music, and story circle dialogues, the event aims to uplift and share important legacy stories and histories.

Public Programming:

Why 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.

Creating a Unified Society Through Public Programming

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.

Our Public Programming Offerings include

The Declaration of Independence and Liberty, Then and Now:

A Community Conversation is an event in recognition of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. This conversation brings community members together to reflect upon the principles of the Declaration of Independence, the importance of these principles in our daily lives, what our shared values are as residents of Minnesota and the United States, and how we envision the country will look 250 years into the future.

About Minnesota Writers Off the Page

Minnesota Writers Off the Page is a series that allows local authors the space to share their works and characters – both fictional and real – directly with readers. Books span a range of genres including children's books, young adult fiction, Minnesota non-fiction, poetry, and art. Minnesota Writers Off the Page events are held at venues across the state. In addition to reading from their books, authors are joined in conversation by fellow authors and community members to share more about their craft, subject matter, and how their personal stories and lived experiences inspire their writing.

Minnesota Youth Poet Laureate

The Minnesota Youth Poet Laureate (MYPL) celebrates our state's top youth poets who are committed to artistic excellence, civic engagement, and social impact. Teen writers (ages 13-19) are invited to submit a portfolio of their original poetry and a CV that showcases their artistic excellence and community impact. Local and State Youth Poet Laureates participate in dozens of national convenings, workshops, and performances each year.

Sienna Lee of Moorhead, Minnesota (age 17), the inaugural Minnesota Youth Poet Laureate, was named this year. As Minnesota's first Youth Poet Laureate, Sienna will serve a one-year term as a public ambassador for poetry—appearing at events statewide, engaging communities, and participating in national youth poetry convenings. She will also receive mentorship from Minnesota-based poets and literary organizations committed to artistic excellence, leadership, and civic engagement.

Summer on the Lawn Series

Summers in Minnesota are precious times of gathering and making memories with friends, neighbors, and community members. Outdoor events under starry skies, warm temperatures, picnics, and plenty of bug spray make the season unforgettable. MHC is thrilled to present a family-friendly event series called Summer on the Lawn that encourages spending time together while enjoying and learning from the humanities in new, accessible, and sunshiny ways!

Civic Renewal:

Why Civic Renewal

The strength of our democracy and the 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.

Creating a Just Society Through Civic Renewal

"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 Civics Programming Offerings include

Voices Forward

Voices Forward is a poetry and public humanities initiative for emerging youth poets (ages 13-19) from across Minnesota. Poets will explore the Smithsonian Folklife Festival's themes:

Remembering Together
Harmonizing Together
Moving Together
Building Together

Sketches of Minnesota

The Minnesota Humanities Center and Danger Boat Productions launched Sketches of Minnesota to encourage active listening, facilitate real conversation, and to provide communities throughout the state with a night of fun. This unique initiative allows attendees space for an evening of listening to and talking with their neighbors, along with a meal and a healthy dose of improvisational comedy, about the concerns, hopes, and dreams of their community.

We Are Water MN

We Are Water MN deepens connections between the humanities and water through a network of partnerships, a traveling exhibit, and public events. We Are Water MN helps communities, organizations, and individuals make better, more collaborative, and more relevant choices about water.

Spark! Places of Innovation

Spark! Places of Innovation (Spark!) is a traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street (MoMS) program. The exhibit dives into innovation and inventions happening in rural America. Spark! features stories from over 30 rural communities across the nation that reveal the dynamic relationship between place and creativity.

Every town is a potential place of innovation. People in small towns are revitalizing old neighborhoods, rejuvenating historic business districts, establishing local industries, creating new festivals and cultural attractions, and so much more. All it takes is a spark—an idea—to get started. Those sparks are happening right now in small towns across America. This innovative spirit is crucial to sustaining the vitality of rural places and feeds the nation's continuous need for fresh thinking and new solutions. Small towns have big ideas for creating a better today and a more hopeful tomorrow.

Spark! Places of Innovation will be the springboard for diverse local programming in the humanities, sciences, and arts. Visitors will be inspired to learn about innovation that has shaped their own communities and how they may be innovators themselves. This exhibition will be an opportunity for community members to come together in conversation around their community's history, present, and future with innovation.

Event Center:

Minnesota Humanities Center operates a full-service Event Center from its building that offers flexible meeting spaces, which accommodate groups of five to 150, has on-site 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 capital city, as one of the only retreat centers in the city and provides 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.

Between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026, the Event Center hosted around 190 meetings and events, serving over 7,850 people associated with nonprofit organizations, foundations, state agencies, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions and other customers. 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 exist 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.

During the 2025-27 legislative biennium, the MHC received an appropriation of $21.4 million.

2025-2027 Biennium MHC Grants

158 Awardees; $13,621,420.68 Awarded as of July 1, 2026:

- Children's Museums (10 Recipients): Support arts and cultural exhibits and related educational outreach programs.

- Cultural Heritage (74 Recipients): Preserve and honor the cultural heritage of Minnesota, 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 Minnesota.

- Direct Appropriations (5 Recipients): Legislatively named awards supporting different projects during the biennium.

- Emergency Response (9 Recipients): Support communities in responding to a major event in Minnesota; facilitate the process of grieving; encourage healing, or create memorials, or assist in the recovery of the community.

- Ethnic Media (7 Recipients): Create video content in a language other than English.

- Festivals (44 Recipients): Support cultural festivals and events in Minnesota.

- Museums, Exhibits, and Collections (10 Recipients): Support Museums, Exhibits, and Collections in Minnesota.

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 FY24	State FY25	State FY26		
	FY24 Actual	FY25 Budget	FY26 Budget		Total For Biennium (FY 25-27) Expenes for Funding Period
Revenue					
Grant Income State	$ 470,000.00	$ 470,000.00	$ 470,000.00		$ 940,000.00
Expenses					
Salaries	$ 353,064.00	$ 395,959.36	$ 214,015.90		$ 609,975.26
Payroll Related Taxes Federal			$ 16,623.70		$ 16,623.70
Mn Unemployment Taxes					$ -
401K Benefits Employee					$ -
Employee Benefits Insurance	$ 70,562.67	$ 74,040.64	$ 141,660.03		$ 215,700.67
Contract Service	$ 46,373.33		$ 97,700.37		$ 97,700.37
Recognition Activities					$ -
Miscellaneous					$ -
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$ 375,000.00**	**$ 470,000.00**	**$ 470,000.00**		**$ 940,000.00**