HUMANITIES KANSAS

2022 Supplemental Grant Guidelines for Oral History Projects

These guidelines are a supplement to the Culture Preservation Grant guidelines. In preparing the oral history grant application, follow the instructions for a Culture Preservation Grant. A document that addresses the following items must be uploaded to the ATTACHMENTS section of the online application.

1. Brief explanation of the interview topic that will be explored
2. List of people you plan to interview and why
3. Sample interview questions
4. Explanation of how and where the interviews will be conducted (audio or video, home or office)
5. Description of the role your consultant will play in training interviewers and offering feedback on interview techniques
6. Description of who will transcribe the interviews and when transcription will be completed
7. Identify the local archive that will house the materials upon completion and name the statewide archive that will be offered the opportunity to copy materials
8. Sample oral history release form

Before You Write Your Grant….

SELECT YOUR TOPIC

Oral history projects should explore a well-defined topic. Projects that only record memories of the "old days" are less competitive than those that pursue a defined topic or theme. For example, a focused theme might be an occupation, such as the aviation industry; a time period, such as the Civil Rights Movement; or the history of an organization, such as a farm cooperative.

Think of your interviews as a research project in which you are seeking to preserve individual stories connected by a common theme. For example, you could interview members of a community impacted by a natural disaster. The project might capture the stories of survivors, first responders, and those that led the recovery effort. The stories provide different perspectives on the disaster event.

CONSIDER TRAINING

Oral history projects must include at least one training session for interviewers who lack oral history experience. Your project consultant should conduct the training. The consultant can help interviewers refine techniques and interview questions. Ongoing discussion with the consultant, such as sending them a completed interview for review, is important.

UNDERSTAND INTERVIEW METHODS

Develop a list of sample questions for the interview and include this list with your grant application. Every interview is different, and questions can be further refined at a later date. Talk to your consultant when developing these questions.

Include a list of people you hope to interview. An oral history should document a first-person account. Choose interview subjects with first-hand knowledge of the topic, rather than those who can only share stories about events that occurred before they were born or moved to the area. Explain why these individuals were selected.

Consider the location for interviews. A studio or other institutional setting may offer technical advantages, but many interview subjects are more comfortable in familiar surroundings. Visit sites in advance to ensure sound quality and minimal distractions.

How many interviews are possible with this grant? Oral history projects almost always take longer than anticipated. Typically, eight interviews will cost approximately $2,000. This includes the administration, collection, and transcription of the oral histories.

Should interviews be audio or video recorded? Both audio and video recording are acceptable ways to record an oral history interview. Audio is easier to store and share. Video is more complicated, yet visual elements can convey additional information. Be sure to test equipment and use microphones whenever possible.

Interviewers should be sensitive to the person they are interviewing. Ask in advance for the interviewee's permission to be recorded. Explain the project. All interviewees must sign a release form.

KNOW YOUR EQUIPMENT

Often, volunteers or professionals donate their recording services or record interviews on donated equipment. Culture Preservation grants seldom pay full fees for professional videographers. A professional-quality documentary film can be an excellent way of sharing the outcomes of the project; however, film production is not eligible for funding through this grant. Film production can count as cost share if the sponsor organization secures funding elsewhere.

DVDs, CDs, and external drives are suitable for storing interview recordings. Costs associated with these items can be included in the grant.

PREPARE FOR TRANSCRIPTION

Include a plan for transcription of all interviews as part of your grant application. Analog formats decay and digital formats frequently change. Transcription is the only way to guarantee the stories will not be lost over time. Audio is easier to transcribe than video. Either volunteers or special assistants hired with grant funds may create the transcripts. Allow four hours of clerical time for each hour of recording. Special transcription software exists, but it rarely produces suitable quality.

GET YOUR RELEASE FORMS

Release forms must be obtained from all individuals interviewed. This ensures that future researchers can utilize the interviews. A sample release form must be submitted with your application. See an example form from the Smithsonian Center for Folklife: https://folklife.si.edu/the-smithsonian-folklife-and-oral-history-interviewing-guide/sample-forms/smithsonian

PROVIDE ACCESS TO PROJECT MATERIALS

At the end of the project, all recordings, transcripts, and release forms should be placed in a public archive such as a library or museum that is accessible to researchers during regular hours. HK allows modifications of this requirement by groups with a reasonable need to preserve sensitive or confidential information.

If your project receives HK grant support, you will be required to notify a statewide archive and provide them an opportunity to copy materials produced with HK funds. The cost of duplication and transcription will sometimes be assumed by the archive. To see a list of statewide archives, see the Forms section of the Culture Preservation Grants page: https://www.humanitieskansas.org/grants-programs/culture-preservation-grants.

For More Information

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