CT CULTURE LAB

FOR CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

APPLICANT GUIDELINES

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1.1   OVERVIEW

Connecticut Humanities is pleased to launch a pilot two-year cohort focused on capacity building for Greater Hartford arts, history, and cultural organizations. Read below to learn about how your organization can participate in multiple learning intensives, monthly coaching calls, and group networking opportunities. Participating organizations will also receive capacity-building stipends to support reaching their operational goals.

CT Culture Lab supports Connecticut organizations that deploy arts, history, and other cultural activities for public benefit. This capacity-building cohort focuses on professional development and opportunities to learn from one another, all in order to better serve their communities. The goal is for organizations to grow more resilient by improving sustainability, community participation, and service to their audiences. While the cohort program will focus on capacity building themes, it will be adaptive to participants' needs and the changing funding landscape.

Participants will have access to funds to implement capacity-building work throughout the cohort based on needs assessed and discussed. Capacity-building efforts may and are encouraged to be collaborative. Funds will be distributed annually following the completion of the first quarter's trainings and goal setting.

1.2   PRIORITIES FOR PARTICIPANT SELECTION

CT Humanities (CTH) gives priority to participating organizations that include a desire to offer public arts & humanities focus and content; explore topics and stories in an inclusive, diverse, and equitable manner; and do one or more of the following:

- Build sustainable organizational structures and contribute to long term cultural vibrancy in CT.
- Demonstrate an interest in ingenuity and innovation through creative solutions.
- Foster collaboration among organizations, groups, and communities.

If your capacity-building goals involve the interpretation of Indigenous history or cultures, please also note CT Humanities' Indigenous Values Statement.

Please note that priority will be given to nonprofit or fiscally sponsored organizations whose operating budgets are under $1 million and who did not receive 2025 Arts and Culture Appreciation Grants from HFPG. If an organization's operating budget exceeds $1 million or they received an Appreciation Grant, they may apply and explain why they are a good fit for the program within the application.

1.3   EXCLUSIONS FOR PROGRAM FUND USE

This program includes annual stipends to support organizational capacity growth. The following are exclusions for how stipends may be spent in accordance with CTH governing rules:

- Advocating a particular political, philosophical, religious or ideological point of view or a particular program of social action or change; lobbying
- Creation of musical compositions, dance, paintings, sculpture, poetry, short stories, novels or other artistic products including book printing or publication or Acquisition of artifacts, works of art or documents
- Curricula for classes not accessible to the general public, Individual fellowships, graduate education or university-based projects that require participants to register for academic credit
- Purchase of food, alcohol, refreshments or catering services, including food purchased during travel or as a per diem
- Ticket or admission fee underwriting or reimbursement
- Honoraria, stipends or professional fees for applicant organization's board members, elected officials or declared candidates seeking public office

1.4   WHO CAN APPLY

An applicant organization must:

- Be based in the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving service area
- Be incorporated in the state of Connecticut as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by a board of directors that meets regularly **OR** be a city or municipality in the state of Connecticut **OR** be a Connecticut-based federally or State recognized tribe
- Provide arts, culture, and history programming and/or services to the public

*Fiscal sponsors are permitted for organizations who do not have their own 501c3 status. Capacity-building funds will be paid to the fiscal sponsors, who will be responsible for the management of grant funds. Fiscal sponsors must be located in CT.

The following are not eligible for funding:

- For-profit organizations
- Individuals
- Agencies of the state of Connecticut, including state universities, state parks and historic sites
- Organizations not in compliance with terms and conditions of previous Connecticut Humanities grants
- Organizations not in compliance with terms and conditions of previous HFPG grants

1.5   SCHEDULE

Program Launch:

- Consult meetings & application help sessions: November 2025-January 2026

- Please note that staff will be unavailable December 22, 2025-January 2, 2026 as the department is closed for the holidays.

  - Deadline to submit you application for a draft review: January 26, 2026
  - Application deadline: February 1, 2026 by 11:59 p.m. in the CTH grant portal
  - Notifications: mid-March 2026

Program Events:

- March 27, 2026 Kick-Off Meeting (virtual)
- April 24, 2026 Year 1, Intensive 1
- August 21, 2026 Year 1, Intensive 2
- December 18, 2026 Year 1, Intensive 3
- April 16, 2027 Year 2, Intensive 4
- August 20, 2027 Year 2, Intensive 5
- December 17, 2027 Year 2, Intensive 6

*For the best cohort experience please check and hold all dates listed.

1.6   REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

Cohort program applications must include:

- The applicant organization's current board list
- The applicant organization's current year operating budget

If the applicant is a fiscal sponsor, the required attachments must reflect both the fiscal sponsor and themselves.

1.7   HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted using Connecticut Humanities' online grant portal.

Before applying, organizations must contact CTH Grants staff (grants@cthumanities.org) to discuss your needs & eligibility. This may be attendance at one of the info sessions offered by CTH or an individual meeting with CTH grants officers. If you would like a draft review, you must save your draft in the CTH Grant Portal and email staff to request a draft review no later than Jan 26.

Please note the following mistakes that will weaken an application:

- Applications submitted without prior communication with CTH staff about your interest
- Applications submitted from an ineligible organization (see Section 1.4)
- Applications from organizations unrelated to the cultural sector

- Incomplete or late applications

Please review your application carefully before submitting it. No edits may be made to an application once the grant deadline has passed unless clarification is specifically requested from CTH staff.

If an applicant experiences technical difficulties when submitting their application, the applicant must reach out to CTH Grants Staff either by phone or email (grants@cthumanities.org) within 12 hours of the grant deadline.

For more information on the application process, visit: https://cthumanities.org/grant-application-process/

1.8 APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Thank you for your submission! Applications will be reviewed by a committee of CTH staff, board, and external reviewers in February 2026. All applicants will be contacted with results following the review committees' decision in mid-March 2026.