

Oral History Projects: Supplemental Grant Guidelines

Oral history provides first-person perspectives to events and preserves details that expand our understanding of the past. Oral history projects are supported by **Culture Preservation Grants** up to \$3,500. Before you write your grant, consider the following best practices.

Planning an Oral History Project

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 story 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.

Consider multiple perspectives. Seek 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.

Training session for interviewers. Your project consultant should conduct a training session for interviewers new to oral history projects. The consultant can help refine techniques and develop interview questions. Ongoing communication with the consultant throughout the project is important.

List 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. Consider different perspectives of the same event.

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.

Time. 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.

Audio or video? 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.

Release Forms

This cannot be stressed enough: *All interviewees and interviewers must sign a release form.* Doing this before the interview clarifies the goals and purposes of the recording and grants permission. Release forms ensure that future researchers can utilize the interviews. A sample release form must be submitted with your application; an example is available in the Forms section of the Culture Preservation Grants webpage.

Recording Equipment

Up to 25% of the Culture Preservation grant funds can be used toward purchase of recording equipment. DVDs, CDs, and external drives are suitable for storing interview recordings. Keep in mind that transcription of the interviews is required.

Transcription

Include a plan for transcription of all interviews as part of your grant application. Analog recording formats decay and digital formats frequently change. Transcription is the only way to guarantee the stories will not be lost over time. Many good transcription services are available online. Do plan to proofread the transcriptions before archiving.

Public Archive Access

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.

Grant Application: Additional Questions & Attachment

In preparing the grant application, the following questions will appear when you click “Oral History Project” in the Supplemental Questions. *Note that an attachment is also required:*

Additional Questions:

Who do you plan to interview, and why?

Provide sample interview questions.

How will the interviews be conducted?

- Audio
- Video

Where will the interviews take place?

- Home
- Office
- Other

Describe the role your consultant will play in training interviewers and offering feedback on interview techniques

How will the interviews be transcribed, and when will transcription be completed?

Identify the local archive that will house the materials upon completion.

Name the statewide archive that will be offered the opportunity to copy materials.

Attachment: Attach a sample Oral History Release Form at the end of the application (PDF or Word)

For More Information

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