



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously-funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the current guidelines, which reflect the most recent information and instructions, at <https://www.neh.gov/program/spotlight-humanities-higher-education>.

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Education Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: *Voices of the Treasure Valley*

Institution: The College of Idaho

Project Director: Rachel Miller

Grant Program: Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education Exploration Grants

Project Narrative

Humanities content and activities

By virtually any measure, the Treasure Valley Region of southern Idaho is undergoing a transformative change. According to the 2022 US Census, the three cities at the center of the region—Caldwell, Nampa, and Meridian—all rank in the nation’s fifteen fastest growing municipalities. While it is easy to find public statements that celebrate or lament this growth, there are few places where residents can document, learn about, and reflect on these changes. There are even fewer places where they can look for common ground and explore difference in a neutral, non-partisan manner. Policy and legislation are crucial to creating a just and sustainable Valley, but residents will also benefit from engagement with the humanities, defined by the Stanford Humanities Center as “the study of how people process and document the human experience.” This is precisely what the region needs at this critical juncture, and “Voices of the Treasure Valley” is the first step.

“Voices of the Treasure Valley” will be based out of the College of Idaho in Caldwell, a liberal arts college and the oldest educational institution in the region. Working under direction from community members, students and faculty will begin collecting and interpreting the stories, histories, and creative expressions of the many people who now call the Valley home. In the last two hundred years, the Treasure Valley has housed Shoshone, Bannock and Paiute peoples; Basque and Scottish settlers; and Mexican American communities, all of whom live together now as neighbors. Irrigation transformed the arid high desert conditions into an agricultural powerhouse, and population growth is now reshaping the landscape once again, from farmlands into exurbs. While some of this history is represented in public-facing signage or local institutions, much of it remains in private collections and personal memories. This is particularly true for the twentieth century, which is usually overshadowed by “pioneer” histories of the nineteenth-century and grand founding narratives. Local students at the College of Idaho often have personal experience with both the region’s complex history and its rapid pace of change, but there are few opportunities for them to think critically about this process in the College curriculum or as members of a larger community. “Voices of the Treasure Valley” will give students a central role in bringing together historic preservationists, tribal historians, storytellers, community activists, and other guardians of local histories to consider what narratives we want to preserve and share. In the process, College of Idaho students will re-encounter the place where they live and study within the framework of both academic and community-engaged public humanities research and presentation.

In the exploratory first year, students and faculty at the College of Idaho will convene a series of meetings with caretakers of the region’s history, which will be used to constitute an Advisory Board of about eight to ten people. HannaLore Hein, the Idaho State Historian, will lead outreach over the summer to local cultural institutions, historic sites, historic preservations organizations, teachers, and other potential partners. These organizations may include Caldwell Historic Preservation, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe at Fort Hall, Hispanic Voices of Idaho, the

Congregation Ahavath Beth Israel, the Boise City Department of Arts and Culture, the Nampa Public Library, the College of Western Idaho, and local high schools.

The first of three Advisory Board meetings will be held in August. Hosted by the College of Idaho, these meetings will give Board members a chance to discuss what they would like to see included in “Voices of the Treasure Valley.” This may include what perspectives should be honored and collected, what events or places are included, and what themes or questions could be highlighted as we narrate and reflect on the Treasure Valley’s changes. Board members will also consider what kind of public-facing project they think would be most engaging for the communities they serve (i.e., a website or app, a pop-up exhibit that could travel to various farmer’s markets, a collection of resources geared toward K-12 teachers), with project planning guidance from the Idaho State Historian. Both the commitments and resources of the Board members and the interests of the communities served by their organizations will guide the planning.

The group will convene at least two more times, in January and in May. In January, the partners and stakeholders will finalize a list of interviewees for a pilot oral history project conducted by College of Idaho students as a part of a history course discussed below, which will be the first collecting effort for “Voices of the Treasure Valley.” Oral history is an ideal format for the project’s first phase. As a “method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events,” as defined by the Oral History Association, oral history necessarily focuses on the recent past, with living interviewees and interviewees, and highlights the interpersonal dimensions of social change. In May, the College will host the final planning meeting of the year. At this meeting, College of Idaho faculty and students will present and share their work with the Advisory Board and the oral history interviewees, if they choose to attend. The Board will revisit earlier conversations and draft a plan for the next stage of the project. To summarize, the goals of the exploratory phase of the project are to assemble an Advisory Board; to have that Board begin the discussion of what to collect and how to present this in order to best serve the project’s goals; and to begin the process of documenting and reflecting on the region with a pilot oral history program.

In the spring semester (February to May) students enrolled in HIS 305: Introduction to Public History at the College of Idaho will begin to bring the Advisory Board’s vision to life. Specifically, they will conduct oral histories and write short entries on the region’s underrepresented histories for the course’s primary assignments. In addition to core instruction from Rachel Miller, expert visitors to the class will train students in project management, oral history, archival research, historic preservation, and tribal and community history. Students will undertake site visits with Treasure Valley historian Chuck Randolph and with members of the Boise Arts and History staff, and they will work with Christine Schutz, Director of the Library at the College of Idaho, to identify compelling stories and artifacts currently housed in the College archives that can contribute to the region’s history. Alongside this skill-building and reflection, students enrolled in HIS 305 will conduct oral history interviews following connections made by

the Advisory Board. This will include preparing questions, creating a release form and worksheet that documents the details of the interview, and completing a post-interview follow-up. They will also explore oral history's basic theories and concepts, the ethical questions posed by oral history, and the method's relationship to other kinds of sources and interpretation approaches. Students will use theirstory.io, a remote interviewing platform that can be used to record, edit, store, and transcribe interviews, and the College will work with theirstory.io to create a deed of gift that ensures that the interviews belong to the individuals in the recording. By the semester's end, students will have contributed to the "Voices of the Treasure Valley" initial collecting efforts, which can be used in future iterations of this class, while also developing skills in humanities research methods. The Spotlight grant will improve humanities teaching at the College of Idaho not only in this first year but in the future as well, as it will allow for the integration of an existing course with new collaborative, public-facing project that is both exciting and sustainable in terms of resources and personnel.

The primary audience for the exploratory year of this project are the students enrolled in HIS 305 (24 students), two College of Idaho interns who will support the project throughout the year, the Advisory Board members, and the oral history interviewees. However, we also plan to invite the full campus community to a closing event at the semester's close when students explain their research process and develop dialogue questions to spark conversation. The campus-wide event will serve both to encourage campus community members to think critically about where they live and to participate in the project's future iterations. The project interns will gain experience in the project management side of public history while also building connections between the student body, the Advisory Board, and partner organizations. After this first exploratory year, we hope that "Voices of the Treasure Valley" continues to find a growing audience through partnerships with libraries, K-12 schools, and other humanities nonprofits.

This project will achieve three related goals that will improve humanities teaching and learning at the College. First, the oral histories and short sketches created by HIS 305 students will document regional histories that might otherwise not be recorded and shared with a wider public. Second, students will build skills as researchers and humanists. While the College of Idaho offers abundant opportunities for advanced STEM immersion, there are fewer paths for students to gain comparable hands-on experience in the humanities. Finally, the project will give students the opportunity to develop connections with local humanities organizations and their neighbors while conducting the oral histories, working with the Advisory Board, and participating in class workshops on public history. They can then share this new knowledge with their friends, families, and communities, and allow their expanded perspectives to inform their interactions with strangers. This is why the topic addressed by "Voices of the Treasure Valley" is important. We are addressing a major question—what kind of place has the Treasure Valley been, and what is it becoming?—at a time not only of great change, but in a polarized environment where there are few places for people to talk about where they live in a collaborative and reflective manner.

Project personnel

The Project Director for “Voices of the Treasure Valley” is Rachel Miller, Assistant Professor of History at the College of Idaho. HannaLore Hein, the State Historian for Idaho, will lead outreach in assembling the Advisory Board, offer workshops for students, and serve as a general consultant for the project. Chuck Randolph, a longtime educator and local historian who has served on multiple nonprofit and municipal boards, will also assist with recruiting and project development. HannaLore Hein will coordinate with Zack Ellis, of theirstory.io platform, to train students in oral history. Yvette Tuell, MA, a Policy Analyst with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe at Fort Hall, will consult and offer a workshop for students in tribal and community history. Angie Davis, MA, a reference librarian with the Idaho State Archives, will play a similar role and offer an introduction to archival research. Christine Schutz, the Director of the Library at the College of Idaho, will also play a key role in helping students identify potential materials for the project in the College Archives. Members of the Advisory Board may also play a similar role in the classroom. Some of the potential Advisory Board member organizations are listed above, but this list is provisional because one of the year’s goals is to identify interested community partners and stakeholders.

Institutional context and benefit

The College of Idaho is the only private, liberal arts institution in the state of Idaho and consequently occupies a unique role in addressing the higher education needs of the state. As a residential liberal arts college, its mission is to prepare students to lead productive and fulfilling lives. The College offers a living and learning experience that engages students on a personal basis in order to instill the skills and understanding needed to flourish in a rapidly changing, diverse, and technologically informed world. The institution emphasizes frequent and meaningful interaction with faculty, the exploration of challenging ideas, and a well-rounded course of study in the liberal arts disciplines enriched by pre-professional and interdisciplinary programs in tandem with co-curricular student life experiences. The College’s historic mission as a liberal arts college is bolstered by current research on the value of a humanities education. According to the National Humanities Alliance, humanities majors are employed at rates comparable to other majors and fields, earn comparable salaries, and do increasingly well over the course of their careers. Of equal importance, and of significant relevance to “Voices of the Treasure Valley,” is the fact that humanities students are prepared to be engaged and empathetic citizens who lead fulfilling lives. In its combination of humanities research skills preparation and community engagement, this project serves both of these outcomes.

The school has a current enrollment of approximately 1,070 full time students and just realized the second highest undergraduate enrollment in its history. The majority of students come from within the state, with the highest percent from the state’s southwestern region, the very subject of this project. However, this does not mean that the student body is homogenous. The school has prioritized diversity in student population and 20% of the current student body self-report as Hispanic, African American, Asian American, Native American or multiethnic. In addition, about 10% of the population are international students who represent 46 countries.

The college has also prioritized making college accessible to lower income families. The percentage of students who received an income-based federal Pell grant intended for low-income students was 28% in 2020-2021, and was the College named the No. 1 school for Top Performers on Social Mobility among all National Liberal Arts Colleges by U.S. News & World Report for 2021.

“Voices of the Treasure Valley” responds directly to both the mission of the College of Idaho and the current composition of its student body. The region we intend to document and explore has long been home to the families of many of our students, but it is also a new place—and sometimes a new country—for some of their peers. As a microcosm of the creation of a diverse and changing social body, the College will strengthen its position as the region’s hub for humanistic inquiry. In the phrasing of the Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences, the humanities “are disciplines of memory and imagination, telling us where we have been and helping us envision where we are going.” There is no place more deserving of this endeavor than the Treasure Valley, and no institution better positioned than the College of Idaho to lead this undertaking.

Work Plan Template

College of Idaho

Voices of Treasure Valley, NEH Exploratory Spotlight Grant

Project Dates: June 1, 2023– May 31, 2024

| Overall Project Goal: To build a team and the necessary project skills and infrastructure for “Voices of the Treasure Valley” local history project | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|
| Objective 1: Assemble the “Voices of the Treasure Valley” Advisory Board | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activities to Accomplish Objective | Responsible Staff | Time Line (in months) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | June | July | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | |
| • Contact and assemble the Advisory Board | HannaLore Hein | X | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| • Hold three meetings | PD and Interns | | | X | | | | X | | | | X | | |
| • Develop list of oral history interviewees | Adv. Board | | | X | | | | X | | | | | | |
| • Make plan for next stage | PD and Board | | | | | | | | | | | X | X | |
| <p>June and July: HannaLore Hein and Rachel Miller (PD) reach out to cultural institutions, historic sites, historic preservations organizations, teachers, and other potential partners. Outreach will be led by HannaLore Hein with assistance from PD.</p> <p>September: First of three planning meetings with partners and stakeholders, hosted by the College of Idaho. This first meeting will be used to establish what local histories the partners and stakeholders would like to see collected and represented, and what potential community members might be good contributors to an oral history collection.</p> <p>January: Second of three planning meetings. The Advisory Board assembles its final list of community members who might participate in an oral history project and share their contact information with PD and interns. The Advisory Board continues to discuss what they would like to see included in a “Voices of the Treasure Valley” presentation and what format and/or platform they prefer.</p> <p>May: College of Idaho students and interns present their work to the Advisory Board. All materials written and collected by HIS 305 students will be made available for use by community partners. The Advisory Board develops a plan for next steps that builds on the year’s three meetings.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Objective 2: College of Idaho students develop the first “Voices of the Treasure Valley” Materials

| Activities/Deliverables to Accomplish Objective | Responsible Staff | Time Line (in months) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | June | July | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May |
| • Conduct oral histories | PD | | | | | | | | | X | X | | |
| • Coordinate class visits and workshops | PD and HannaLore Hein | | | | | | X | X | | | | | |
| • Develop a public-facing presentation with class materials that will be presented to Advisory Board members, oral history interviewees, and the campus community | PD and Interns | | | | | | | | | | X | X | X |
| • Student interns conduct preliminary research in the college archives | PD | | | | X | X | X | | | | | | |

Details:

September to December: College of Idaho interns and PD conduct research in the College archives for potential contributions to the larger collection under the supervision of Christine Schutz, Director of the Library.

February to May: Students enrolled in HIS 305 conduct oral history interviews and draft short entries on underrepresented local histories (with sources including but not limited to the college’s history and archives) as the course’s primary assignments. Guest experts and local site visits will introduce students to best practices in oral history, archival methods, historic preservation, and community and tribal history. These visits will be coordinated by the PD, with support from student interns and HannaLore Hein.