

## 2. Application Narrative

### A. Abstract

Oregon Humanities (OH) will increase the impact of our successful Conversation Project by connecting more Oregonians to ideas that change lives and transform communities. With NEH support, OH will ensure that every county in Oregon has regular access to high-quality humanities-based discussion programs and a relevant and welcoming model of convening community members for reflective conversation across differences of belief, political affiliation, race, class, language, and educational background. OH will build more, and more diverse, partnerships with host organizations, with greatest attention to rural and Spanish-speaking communities; grow our team of discussion leaders with attention to geographic, ethnic, racial, and topical diversity; and develop annual responsive statewide community conversation initiatives that will provide deeper public programming opportunities through scholar cohort work and educational toolkits. The result will be a more resilient and connected Oregon.

### B. Nature of the request

Oregon Humanities (OH) is requesting a \$390,000 Public Humanities Project Community Conversations Implementation grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to support growth of the Conversation Project between April 2017 and April 2020. We are also applying for an additional \$60,000 in support of a Position in the Public Humanities, a bilingual (English/Spanish) program coordinator, outlined in Attachment 9. For the past seven years, OH has put community conversations at the heart of our statewide work through the Conversation Project; we have connected nearly 100 humanities scholars with more than 280 nonprofit and community organizations through nearly 800 programs, reaching more than 20,000 Oregonians. More recently, Conversation Project has inspired new topic-specific, responsive statewide community conversation initiatives. A three-year grant from the NEH will enable us to significantly increase our impact in Oregon by:

- **Building more, and more diverse, partnerships with host organizations, with greatest attention to rural and Spanish-speaking communities.** With our current base of funding, we are only able to annually approve 125 English-language Conversation Project programs statewide, primarily because of high mileage costs to rural areas; we have high demand from partners and increasing interest from Spanish-speaking communities. With NEH funding, OH will approve 200 programs annually, fund all rural requests, and offer at least 5 percent Spanish-language programs annually. An NEH-supported program coordinator will help us achieve these goals.
- **Growing our roster of discussion leaders with particular attention to geographic, ethnic, racial, and topical diversity.** We currently have a roster of thirty-five humanities-based discussion leaders, the majority of whom only speak English and live within 100 miles of the I-5 mid-Willamette Valley corridor. With NEH funding, OH will broaden our discussion leader roster to sixty-five individuals across all regions of Oregon, at least 10 percent of whom will speak Spanish. This will ensure our team best reflects the demographics of the state and can be responsive to current and emerging community issues.
- **Developing regular, annual responsive statewide initiatives that will provide deeper public programming opportunities through scholar cohort work, training, and educational toolkits.** We recently began offering topic-specific, responsive statewide community conversation initiatives on issues such as race and policing, Oregon's history of racism, death and dying, and the connections between power, place, and belonging. Convening multi- and interdisciplinary groups of humanities-based scholars for these initiatives has enriched program and educational toolkit content. With NEH funding, OH will develop one responsive initiative annually, each composed of up to twenty-four statewide public programs and a scholar cohort training.

The format of OH's community conversation work will include face-to-face public conversations, in-person discussion leader trainings, in-person and online discussion leader cohort work/support, and

online and/or print educational resources and toolkits. The main themes of OH's community conversation work include (1) the changing demographics of Oregon, (2) power and place, and (3) the human condition. This proposal responds to the following NEH areas of interest:

- **The Common Good: The Humanities in the Public Square:** In our current climate of ideological divisiveness, the need is strong for spaces that invite open dialogue and offer opportunities for people to listen to and share opinions with those with whom they may disagree. Oregon's complex history of xenophobia, fierce independence, and community building has created a strange legacy of both exclusionary and forward-thinking policies and structures that continue to affect the daily lives of residents. The humanities offer a robust set of tools with which to explore these histories and ideas, and OH has a strong track record of applying humanities texts and questions to the complex challenges we face.
- **Reaching underserved audiences:** 89 percent of the state's counties contain rural or frontier areas, and in the last decade, the Hispanic population in Oregon has increased by 64 percent. This project will connect with these communities and ensure they have regular access to high-quality and/or culturally specific humanities-based programming.

### C. Humanities content

*In over thirty years of being an active library patron, I have never experienced a forum so fulfilling, enriching, timely, insightful, and truly, truly, wonderful as this [2015 Oregon Humanities community conversation on race and policing]. There is a lot in the news on this subject, and much that is worthy gets lost in the noise. This program cut through that noise, to an unbiased, intelligent articulation of the times, issues, and problems we face, and gave me real hope that, with intelligent introspection of the kind presented by [the discussion leader], we will, through greater understanding, rise to a level of a better society.*

—Conversation participant

The use of the phrase “cut through that noise” above illustrates how OH's trained discussion leaders employ the best content and tools of humanities-based community conversations. Guided by Lewis & Clark College professor of history Elliott Young, this program in February 2015 addressed the pressing and complex question, “What is the relationship between race and policing?” The program offered context and grounding through James Baldwin's 1960 essay “In Search of a Majority” and an overview of historical trends and statistics. It also presented participants with the opportunity to consider a range of perspectives on an issue that mattered greatly to them and that had received broad-ranging media coverage, and gave them room to think through a number of possible responses.

In April 2016, OH partnered with Rural Organizing Project and a dozen new racial and social justice partners on a special tour of one of our most popular Conversation Project programs, “Why Aren't There More Black People in Oregon? A Hidden History.” The tour stopped in six rural communities—Cave Junction, Cottage Grove, Monmouth, La Grande, Prineville, and Scappoose—and, over a two-week period, brought together nearly 600 Oregonians. To explore the program's titular question, Conversation Project leader Walidah Imarisha used an illustrated and annotated timeline of Oregon's history of exclusionary laws targeted at individuals and communities of color, then pushed the conversation into the present-day by posing the question, “What does this living legacy of racism mean for communities in Oregon today?” Justin Chin, director of career services at Eastern Oregon University, co-hosted the program in La Grande and shared the following sentiment with us, which is echoed in his attached letter of support: “Oregon Humanities' Conversation Project has created a space for the students with whom I work to engage in meaningful dialogue in which they have opportunities to develop cultural fluency, critical thinking and analysis, as well as the ability to take criticism and learn.”

These two brief examples show how OH's community conversations engage both the *disciplines* of the humanities—including, in these examples, history, ethics, literature, and jurisprudence—and the *practices* of the humanities. Every OH community conversation revolves around a public-facing question that can't be easily and succinctly answered. Every program challenges participants to think about their beliefs and about the relationship between what they think and how they act in the world. And every

program employs humanities content to bring more light to the topic at hand and to anchor, equalize, and raise the level of discussion.

Looking ahead over the next three years, all of OH's community conversation programming—including six hundred Conversation Project programs and seventy-two responsive conversations—will fall under the three core humanities themes outlined below. We will craft our work around these broad themes because they represent meaningful opportunities to (1) engage diverse audiences in considering their relationships to the world, the places where they live, and themselves, (2) convene diverse cohorts of inter- and multidisciplinary humanities-based scholars, (3) respond to timely community issues and concerns, and (4) connect with the myriad humanities texts that explore these overarching themes. But further, for Oregon's rural and Spanish-speaking communities, these themes are lived out every day through lack of geographical and/or culturally specific access to quality healthcare, food, wages, and, related to this proposal, educational and civic activities. In this way, we intentionally selected themes that were open and adaptable to different communities.

**Theme 1: The changing demographics of Oregon (including but not limited to immigration, refugees, homelessness, veterans, and aging)**

Select confirmed programs from our 2016–17 Conversation Project catalog:

- **“Arab Refugees in Our Midst: Terrorism, Bigotry, and Freedom”** by Yasmeen Hanoosh, associate professor of Arabic Studies at Portland State University. Core question: “What is our responsibility to newcomers?”
- **“Are International Trade Agreements Good for Oregon?”** by Michael Fakhri, associate professor at the University of Oregon School of Law. Core question: What is the value of international trade agreements for Oregon communities, businesses, and individuals?

**Theme 2: Power and place (including but not limited to surveillance, race and equity, gender, interracial families, and land management)**

Select confirmed programs from our 2016–17 Conversation Project catalog:

- **“Power, Privilege, and Racial Diversity in Oregon”** by Emily Drew, associate professor of sociology and ethnic studies at Willamette University. Core question: What does the opportunity to embrace a more diverse Oregon mean?
- **“What We Want from the Wild”** by Adam Davis, executive director of Oregon Humanities and former director of the Center for Civic Reflection. Core questions: What do we understand nature to be, and how do we see ourselves fitting in?

**Theme 3: The human condition (including but not limited to service, leadership, death and dying, rest, and belonging).**

Select confirmed programs from our 2016–17 Conversation Project catalog:

- **“Looking for Leadership: What Do We Want from Leaders?”** by Lois Ruskai Melina, leadership studies teacher at Gonzaga University. Core questions: How are leadership, power, and authority different, and are they always used in service to the greater good?
- **“Talking about Dying”** by a cohort of chaplains, counselors, gerontologists, and hospice transition caregivers. Core question: When we think about our own dying, what do we want most?

Given the thematic breadth and diversity of community issues in Oregon and the goal of OH to be responsive in our annual topic-specific community conversation initiatives, the humanities content of those initiatives over the next three years will vary, although they will be grounded in the three themes listed above and representative of our recent work described in this proposal. However, we have identified **food**, **water**, and **home** as potential responsive initiative topics given current headlines and trends in public policies.

OH's community conversations are important because they expose participants to thoughtful, unbiased information about timely issues and ideas, and also give them opportunities to listen, reflect, and grow. Further, talking with people from different backgrounds helps participants develop the ability to understand the world from the perspectives of others and to build the communication skills needed to resolve conflicts. Participants have reported that OH's community conversations help them see “how

people with such different and conflicting perspectives can find common ground and get meaningful work done” and motivate them to “continue the conversation with the greater community in this attempt to hear each other.” And one of our nonprofit partners in Tillamook County relayed the following after a recent Conversation Project program: “Our attendees were invited to stay afterwards to brainstorm different programs we could have [here] as a follow up to this excellent program.”

For many of our rural partners, OH is their primary source of adult programming. Kate Lasky, executive director of Josephine Community Libraries and OH board member, writes in her letter of support, “As a public library director in rural southern Oregon, these programs have made it possible for our community to build meaningful dialogue and connections around topics that concern us both locally and statewide.” And Roberto Franco, program director for Oregon Community Foundation’s Latino Partnership, writes, “OH’s greater attention to Spanish-speaking communities is connected to my work and concerns because we rely on skillful humanities-based discussion leaders to make Oregon Latinos feel welcome and safe to engage in dialogue.”

In addition to the significance that OH’s community conversations have for participants, hosts, and the communities where they take place, the program model has become an inspiration and starting point for OH in creating new initiatives, collaborations, and humanities-based scholar cohorts, all of which deepen Oregonians’ engagement with humanities content. Within the last two years we have built on partnerships and experience established through the Conversation Project to implement responsive statewide community conversation initiatives on timely topics including race and policing (five programs in Portland; five discussion leaders); Oregon’s racial history (twelve programs in as many rural communities statewide; one discussion leader); and death and dying (thirty-eight programs in thirty-five communities statewide; eight discussion leaders).

We are also about to launch a series of twenty-six programs about power, place, and belonging, called *This Place*. For this series, OH convened a team of ten humanities-based discussion leaders from the fields of tribal resource management, anthropology, conflict resolution, applied theology, natural resource management, ethnic studies, and fisheries science. In fall 2016, with guidance from this cohort of discussion leaders and community host partners, Oregonians will explore their relationships to the places they’ve come from and the places they’re in now; consider how communities have lost or gained land, and how this has affected individuals and groups within these communities; reflect on the history of neighborhoods, communities, and the state, and how those places have changed over time; and explore options for meaningful engagement with their places and communities going forward. Participants will engage with texts such as Sandra Cisneros’ “Bums in the Attic,” Chief Joseph’s “I Will Fight No More Forever,” J.P. White’s “Thanksgiving Night, Old Town, Portland,” and Naomi Shihab Nye’s “Trying to Name What Doesn’t Change.” These community conversations, as well as the associated discussion leader training, educational toolkit, and one-day culminating gathering—featuring Daniel Kemmis, author of *Community and the Politics of Place*, and Elizabeth Woody, Oregon Poet Laureate and enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs—are supported by an NEH Common Good: Humanities in the Public Square grant.

#### **D. Project formats**

The six hundred Conversation Projects (two hundred per year) and three responsive initiatives (up to twenty-four programs per year) that fall within the proposed grant period will bring Oregonians together to talk face-to-face—across differences, beliefs, and backgrounds—about important issues and ideas. To engage public audiences in this way, OH will use the following formats:

**Community conversations:** Conversations will reach nearly 17,000 Oregonians over the course of the grant period. Each one-time, ninety-minute program revolves around five components: (1) a nonprofit or community partner host, (2) a trained humanities-based discussion leader who frames and guides the conversation, (3) an open-ended framing question, (4) a set of humanities-based prompts to ground the discussion, and (5) a group of community members who consider the program topic from a range of perspectives. Sound/audio for conversations can be amplified for participants with hearing

impairment. We intend to have a minimum of 5 percent of conversations presented in Spanish with Spanish-language materials.

**Discussion leader requests for proposals:** OH will recruit future humanities-based discussion leaders (beyond those named in this proposal and project walkthrough) for both Conversation Project and responsive initiatives through widely disseminated requests for proposals in advance of each selection period. We recruit humanities-based scholars who meet the following criteria: want to learn from and engage with public audiences, and who are excited about engaging with different viewpoints; value conversation as a tool to learn, connect, and explore ideas; want to lead exploratory, open-ended conversations, rather than teaching, leading workshops, or building consensus; and will expand the diversity of perspectives and humanities content already represented in our community conversations.

**Discussion leader trainings:** To prepare new humanities-based scholars for engagement with public audiences, we will train them using our reflective, text-based conversation methodology, which has an established track record of success. Last year we hired a partnership and training manager who—alongside our executive director who, prior to OH, directed the Center for Civic Reflection—formalized OH’s training procedures and offerings, including open-call facilitator trainings, custom program trainings, and discussion leader support opportunities (discussed below). During the proposed grant period, we anticipate onboarding a minimum of five new humanities-based scholars per year through Conversation Project and will schedule an annual new leader training in summer. We also anticipate recruiting an additional five scholars (at minimum) for our three annual responsive initiatives, for which OH will also hold trainings. All trainings will take place at the OH office in Portland and will be led by our team of staff practitioners. Training agendas will address selecting/using humanities texts to ground and guide conversation, asking good questions, and addressing challenges with specific strategies. A more detailed agenda is included in the project walkthrough.

**Discussion leader support and communication:** OH will support our Conversation Project and responsive initiative discussion leaders in their facilitation efforts and professional development through regular cohort emails and/or conference calls, periodic emailed program updates, one-on-one phone or in-person conversations as needed, in-person observation/evaluation during program site visits, and practice programs. In addition to the formal trainings described above for the responsive initiatives, OH will also convene in-person, post-program debrief meetings—three total over the course of the grant period. OH piloted this model of cohort support during the 2015 responsive initiative Talking about Dying and received positive feedback from our discussion leaders on the importance of reconvening to debrief the series. Finally, OH’s new partnership and training manager has recently formalized quarterly in-person discussion leader roundtables, which provide leaders with opportunities to connect with peers and talk through different approaches to facilitation and specific challenges. Recent OH roundtables have addressed the following: how to take conversations deeper into content through texts, questions, and prompts; drawing connections between participants’ contributions and the program topic; practices to address extreme differences and/or conflicts; strategies for engaging groups of any size; and how to embed equity into discussions.

**Educational resources and toolkits:** As a complement to OH’s face-to-face community conversations over the next three years, all programs will feature custom, educational resource lists to be used for additional learning and engagement. These lists are crafted by our humanities-based discussion leaders. Lists will include a bibliography of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, essays, films, and other media respective to the topic. Resource lists will be made available to every program host and participant and will be available for download on the OH website. For responsive initiatives, OH will create and promote custom toolkits, which will be freely available for download from OH’s website and for distribution at community conversation sites. Each of the toolkits will include topic-specific readings, resources, and community organizations; guidelines on how participants might continue the conversation, formally or informally, after the OH program has concluded; general guidelines on being a thoughtful and engaging discussion leader; and strategies for spreading the word about follow-up programming.

## **E. Project Resources**

As noted in Section D, every OH community conversation will include a list of readings and resources. Below are two abbreviated resource lists for select, confirmed Conversation Project programs from our 2016–17 catalog; please see the project walkthrough for more complete examples.

**“Power, Privilege, and Racial Diversity in Oregon” by Emily Drew**

- *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of US Racism* by James Loewen (2005)
- *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* by Audrey Smedley (2011)
- *Local Color*, an OPB video documentary that chronicles the little-known history of racism and the struggle for civil rights in Oregon

**“World without Secrets: Privacy and Expectations in the US” by Wendy Willis**

- Bill of Rights (Amendments I, IV and XIV)
- *Katz v. United States*
- Vaclav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” 1978

As applicable, OH will secure permissions for educational use of these texts in community conversations.

## **F. Project history**

Since 2009, the Conversation Project has connected nearly 100 humanities scholars with more than 280 nonprofit and community organizations through nearly 800 public conversations, reaching more than 20,000 Oregonians. The core belief behind this program is that being exposed to diverse perspectives broadens our understanding of the world around us and, by extension, strengthens communities. OH’s goals for the Conversation Project are as follows: (1) provide a statewide forum for regular engagement in public conversations about ideas that are critical to our daily lives and to our state’s future, (2) encourage Oregonians to be more informed and engaged in the civic activity of their communities, and (3) cultivate the practice of talking and listening to those with whom we may disagree.

In fall 2015 OH developed a new partnership with Cambia Health Foundation, which approached us to create a responsive statewide series of public conversations addressing death and dying. In preparation for the series, OH recruited and trained a statewide team of eight humanities-based discussion leaders coming from the fields of chaplaincy, counseling, death education, gerontology, and hospice care. We worked with this cohort to refine and deepen the humanities content of the conversation, which used texts such as Adrienne Rich’s and Stanley Kunitz’s poems “Final Notations” and “The Long Boat,” respectively, to open a conversation that explored what stories and influences—including religion, culture, gender, language, socioeconomic status—shaped participants’ thinking about death and dying. Between September 2015 and January 2016, OH partnered with thirty-eight public libraries in twenty-four of Oregon’s thirty-six counties to host “Talking about Dying” conversations; 71 percent took place in rural communities. Nearly 800 Oregonians gathered for these community conversations, and many public library partners have gone on to host continuing discussion groups and workshops on the topic. To help facilitate this ongoing engagement, OH provided an extensive resource list that included links to toolkits and a bibliography of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and films about death and dying.

In the past three years, we have also been gradually increasing our work with and understanding of Spanish-speaking communities in Oregon. In October 2014 we partnered with Adelante Mujeres (AM)—a nonprofit that provides education and leadership opportunities to low-income Latina women in Washington County—to offer a five-program conversation series in Spanish to Latinas who were connected to AM’s programs. Conversations focused on themes of identity, community, and justice, and readings included Pablo Neruda’s poem “The Lamb and the Pinecone” and the poem “La Casa” by Gabriela Mistral. Conversation participants expressed the importance of having an opportunity to listen to varied experiences, think together about justice, develop their sense of self, and become more comfortable speaking in large groups. OH discussion leader Claire Barrera shared the following: “I [saw] how literature and discussions named and validated personal experience. What better purpose for a humanities course than that?” More recently OH partnered with the Oregon Community Foundation’s (OCF) Latino Partnership, a statewide plan to address Oregon’s shifting demographics and deepen work on Latino education, leadership development, and civic engagement. As part of this plan, OH and OCF developed

the “Growing the Latino Voice” initiative, piloted in Medford and Salem. Related programming included a three-part, Spanish-language series of conversations called “Vote, Talk, Lead” that convened twenty-five young Latinos to talk about politics, service, and ways to improve Latino political participation and representation. Three Spanish-speaking discussion leaders were recruited and trained by OH for this special series.

OH continues to be a leader in statewide, humanities-based conversations, and combined requests for programs, humanities content consultation, and partnerships increase from year to year. Approximately 35 percent of partners that hosted a Conversation Project event during the 2015–16 season had never hosted a discussion before—and this percentage of new host organizations has been remarkably consistent over the seven years that we have run the program. Even as the Conversation Project has grown, and as OH has begun creating responsive initiatives, we have seen one of every three requests to host conversations coming from new organizational partners. These partners range from traditional humanities partners such as public libraries, civic organizations, museums/historical societies, arts/culture organizations, and community colleges, to nontraditional partners such as religious groups, racial and social justice organizations, environmental groups, philanthropic foundations, medical institutions, and businesses.

Given OH’s strong and consistent track record of high-impact community conversation work, coupled with the groundwork we have laid to increase programming with rural and Spanish-speaking communities, we are well-positioned to expand our work over the next three years with NEH support.

#### **G. Chairman’s special award (n/a)**

#### **H. Audience, marketing, and promotion**

The intended audience for OH’s community conversations are members of the general public who reflect the cultural, racial, social, economic, political, and geographic demographics of the state. Currently OH reaches approximately 60,000 Oregonians, including community members in all thirty-six counties, at-risk youth, rural residents, underserved adults living in poverty, and Spanish-speaking Oregonians. In the past year, we have done significant work to ensure that our participant base is not only growing, but growing in ways that reflect the diversity of backgrounds in Oregon; we therefore prioritize partnering with a diversity of community organizations, recruiting humanities-based scholars from a range of backgrounds and life experience, and meeting with culturally specific organizations about the needs and interests of the people in their communities. The people who gathered at OH’s conversations in the past year are diverse in age, ranging from under twenty-five (19 percent) to over sixty-five (26 percent); in educational background, with two-thirds having a college or advanced degree; and in ethnicity, with 6 percent identifying as Hispanic or Latino, 5 percent as Black, 3 percent as Native, 78 percent as white, and 9 percent as other ethnic groups.

OH has also laid the groundwork in our community conversation work to reach more rural and Spanish-speaking communities. Here in Oregon, we have a total population that is edging toward four million, and we are the ninth-largest state by geography (approximately 300 miles by 400 miles). We have more than twice the land area of Pennsylvania, yet only 14 percent of that state’s population density, making service and programming reach within the state challenging. Further, our economy has been transitioning from natural resource-based to manufacturing-, trade-, and service-based, creating particularly difficult times for the majority of the state’s counties, which relied heavily on timber receipts in past decades. And according to the Pew Research Center and the *Oregonian* newspaper, Oregon’s Latino population grew by 64 percent—five times as fast as the state’s total population—between 2000 and 2010. By the end of 2010, Latinos made up 12 percent of the state’s total population (up from 8 percent in 2000). Since the outset of the current decade, 20 percent of all K–12 students in Oregon are Latino, and 70 percent of all Latino Oregonians speak a language other than English at home.

To connect with our intended participant base, OH will focus on cultivating current and new partnerships with community organizations including but not limited to the community partners listed in Section J, the more than 280 current Conversation Project hosts, and Unite Oregon, August Wilson Red

Door Project, Oregon Library Association, NAACP chapters statewide, Hispanic Interagency Networking Team, Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Latino Network, Rural Development Initiatives, Ford Institute for Community Building, Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, Oregon State University Rural Studies Program, Oregon Solutions Network, and Oregon Health & Science University Oregon Office of Rural Health, among others. We will also leverage our good relationships with the media, extensive communications tools, and network of community partners to market the project and to assist with outreach and audience development for each facet. A marketing plan for the project follows. *Note: This proposal is for three years of programming that would—with some adjustments where necessary—generally follow the same marketing plan year to year. The following marketing plan covers spring 2017 to spring 2018 and will be led in part by the proposed NEH Position in the Public Humanities.*

#### **April–May 2017**

- Conversation Project:
  - Begin assembling collateral from discussion leaders to create 2017–18 Conversation Project catalog. *New leaders will be chosen based on a request for proposals sent in January 2017.*
- Responsive Initiative:
  - Deadline to apply to be discussion leader. *Responsive topic will be selected in January 2017.*
  - Establish/develop relationships with partner organizations that will host programs

#### **June–July 2017**

- Conversation Project:
  - Finalize 2017–18 catalog
  - Outreach travel statewide (including focus on rural and Spanish-language programs)

#### **August 2017**

- Conversation Project:
  - Publish online 2017–18 Conversation Project catalog
  - Send targeted emails to OH public program mailing list
  - Publish newsletter article about new Conversation Project catalog
  - Publish web article about new Conversation Project catalog
  - Mail summer 2017 magazine with news brief about the new Conversation Project catalog
  - Send press release about 2017–18 catalog
  - Outreach travel statewide (including focus on rural and Spanish-language programs)
- Responsive Initiative:
  - Post all confirmed community discussions on web calendar
  - Send press release about series events
  - Schedule all events on OH editorial calendar for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blog
  - Send discussion leaders outreach tools and program collateral
  - Send hosts program handbook and outreach support materials
  - Outreach travel statewide (including focus on rural and Spanish-language programs)

#### **September 2017**

- Conversation Project:
  - Cycle 1 of 2017–18 Conversation Project events begin; post all events on web calendar
  - Send press release about events taking place between September and December
  - Schedule all events on OH editorial calendar for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blog
  - Send hosts program handbook and outreach support materials
  - Publish newsletter calendar including all scheduled events
- Responsive Initiative:
  - Events begin
  - Publish newsletter article about series and calendar listings
  - Reach out to specific media contacts to pitch interviews with discussion leader cohort
  - Continue to post on social media channels



### **October 2017–December 2017**

- Conversation Project and Responsive Initiative
  - Continue to post on social media channels
  - Publish monthly newsletter including all scheduled events

### **January 2018**

- Conversation Project:
  - Cycle 2 of 2017–18 Conversation Project events begin; post all events on web calendar
  - Send press release about events happening between January and April
  - Send hosts program handbook and outreach support materials
  - Continue to post on Facebook and Twitter
  - Send newsletter including all scheduled events
  - Publish Request for Proposals for new Conversation Project leaders and topics for the 2018–19 catalog. Deadline to submit is March 2018.
  - Send targeted emails about the RFP to OH public program mailing list, grant recipients, humanities departments at colleges and universities, and past leaders
  - Distribute postcards about the RFP at events in targeted communities
  - Publish newsletter article about the RFP
  - Publish web article about the RFP
- Responsive Initiative:
  - Begin outreach to partner organizations and statewide research to determine topic for the 2018 responsive initiative

### **February 2018**

- Conversation Project:
  - Continue to post on social media channels
  - Publish newsletter including all scheduled events
- Responsive Initiative:
  - Post open call for new discussion leaders on selected topic; deadline to apply is April 2018
  - Send targeted emails to OH public program mailing list, grant recipients, humanities departments at colleges and universities, and past leaders
  - Publish newsletter article about the cohort
  - Publish web article about the cohort

### **March 2018**

- Conversation Project:
  - Continue to post on social media channels
  - Publish newsletter including all scheduled events
  - Deadline to submit proposals for new programs/leaders
  - Outreach travel statewide (including focus on rural and Spanish-language programs)
- Responsive Initiative:
  - Outreach travel statewide (including focus on rural and Spanish-language programs)

### **April 2018**

- Responsive Initiative:
  - Deadline to apply to be discussion leader.
  - Establish/develop relationships with partner organizations that will host programs
  - Outreach travel statewide (including focus on rural and Spanish-language programs)

### **May 2018**

- Conversation Project:
  - Cycle 3 of 2017–18 Conversation Project events begin; post all events on web calendar
  - Publish press release about events happening between May and August
  - Send hosts program handbook and outreach support materials

## I. Evaluation of the project's impact

We evaluate all OH community conversations qualitatively and quantitatively. Evaluation methods include:

- Discussion leaders: We ask discussion leaders to submit one-page **reflective reports** within forty-eight hours of each program and, for responsive initiatives, a two-page **final report** once their series of programs has concluded. Reporting assesses humanities content, host site logistics, and facilitation. We also ask discussion leaders to complete **online surveys** assessing OH trainings and support.
- Hosts: We **survey** hosts within two days of the program and assess humanities content and facilitation.
- Participants: OH collects participant feedback assessing humanities content, personal experience, and facilitation via on-site **paper evaluations and online surveys** emailed within one week of the program.
- Program volunteers: Inspired by the Illinois Humanities Council's program observer program, OH developed an opportunity for volunteers to **attend and participate** in community conversations and **document and collect stories of impact** from the programs.
- Staff observation: OH staff attend, observe, participate in, and assess as many community conversations as is feasible. This **on-site and in-person assessment** is critical for the conversation-based program format, as well as determining the facilitator's style and approach to the topic. Providing objective, prompt, and candid feedback is a key part of this evaluation method. Staff also write **triannual and final/summative program reports**.

*Note: Average evaluation return rates are 100 percent for discussion leaders, 98 percent for hosts, 35 percent for responsive initiative participants, and 25 percent for Conversation Project participants.*

Select discussion leader reflective reporting questions include:

- What was the substance of the conversation and/or what themes/ideas came up?
- What humanities texts or prompts did you use? How did this push the conversation deeper?
- What was something challenging about the program?

Select participant evaluation ratings (1-Disagree to 5-Agree) include:

- The conversation helped me to better understand what stories and influences shape my thinking about [topic].
- I better understand others' perspectives on [topic] as a result of the conversation.
- I heard perspectives that were different than mine expressed during the conversation.
- The conversation pushed me to think in new ways about [topic].

To date, evaluation results from OH's Conversation Projects and responsive initiatives are incredibly encouraging in thinking about program expansion:

- In our Conversation Project five-year cumulative report, published in 2014, **92 percent** of hosts reported that the discussion leader encouraged and modeled critical thinking.
- To date, **93 percent** of hosts report that they will host additional programs.
- **96 percent** of participants from our April 2016 Black history rural tour responded that they will discuss race with family/friends in the future as a result of the conversation.
- After our 2015–16 Talking about Dying initiative, **92 percent** of participants agreed that they better understand others' perspectives as a result of the conversation.

Feedback from our cohort of humanities-based discussion leaders for Talking about Dying also reported: (1) increased personal and professional development, (2) increased skill and confidence in public conversation facilitation, (3) increased compassion and humility as a result of engaging public audiences, (4) renewed/continued commitment to personal and professional work in the field of death and dying, and (5) increased knowledge of the diversity of Oregon communities.

OH's goals for our community conversation work are to do the following: (1) provide a statewide forum for regular engagement in public conversations about ideas that are critical to our daily lives and to our state's future, (2) encourage Oregonians to be more informed and engaged in the civic activity of their

communities, and (3) cultivate the practice of talking and listening to those with whom we may disagree. The overarching outcomes we seek for expanding our community conversation work in Oregon are:

**Build more, and more diverse, partnerships with host organizations, with greatest attention to rural and Spanish-speaking communities.**

- Increase approved Conversation Project programs from 125 to 200 annually
- Partner with host organizations in all thirty-six counties
- Increase new partner rate to at least 50 percent annually, with a minimum of 60 percent in rural communities
- Ensure a minimum of 5 percent Spanish-language community conversations annually

**Grow our roster of discussion leaders with particular attention to geographic, ethnic, racial, and topical diversity.**

- Increase humanities-based discussion leader roster from thirty-five to sixty-five
- Recruit a minimum of six Spanish-speaking discussion leaders
- Recruit humanities-based community discussion leaders from all regions of Oregon (Coast, Valley, Gorge, Eastern, Central, and Southern)
- Recruit humanities-based discussion leaders that better reflect the changing demographics of Oregon
- Embed equity and inclusion into discussion leader trainings to ensure responsiveness

**Develop regular, annual responsive statewide initiatives that will provide deeper public programming opportunities through scholar cohort work, training, and educational toolkits.**

- Develop one responsive initiative annually, composed of up to twenty-four community conversations in all regions of Oregon (Coast, Valley, Gorge, Eastern, Central, and Southern)
- Develop educational toolkits to enrich program experience and deepen engagement with humanities content
- Recruit cohort of multi- and interdisciplinary, humanities-based leaders annually

Additional indicators of impact include:

- Change in participant and discussion leader awareness and understanding of own and other cultures, beliefs, and experiences
- Change in participant and discussion leader sense of connection to people from different backgrounds
- Change in appreciation of how humanities texts are relevant to one's own life and community
- Number of participants in the community discussions
- Number of times educational resources are downloaded/distributed
- Earned media

## **J. Organizational profile**

OH was founded in 1971 and is an independent affiliate of the NEH and one of the five cultural partners of the Oregon Cultural Trust. Our staff is made up of twelve regular employees and four interns. Our annual operating budget for FY16 is \$1.67 million. Our mission is to connect Oregonians to ideas that change lives and transform communities, and **our vision is an Oregon that invites diverse perspectives, explores challenging questions, and strives for just communities.** We have more than forty years of experience in developing and executing ambitious projects, building statewide partnerships, offering public programs and grants, managing complex budgets, and working with multiple scholars and contributors across the state. More than one hundred civic, cultural, and educational organizations seek to partner with OH annually because of our track record of getting people together across differences, beliefs, and backgrounds to create a more connected, imaginative, and vital Oregon. OH programs, events, grants, and publications encourage Oregonians to learn about and discuss social, cultural, and public issues. Core organizational activities include the following:

- **The Conversation Project** offers Oregon nonprofits and organizations programs that engage community members in thoughtful, challenging conversations about ideas that are critical to our daily lives and our state's future.

- **Think & Drink** is a conversation series that convenes Oregonians to discuss provocative ideas.
- **Humanity in Perspective (HIP)** is a college-level humanities course. HIP provides economically and educationally disadvantaged individuals the opportunity to study the humanities with the guidance of college professors.
- **Oregon Humanities** magazine is a triannual publication devoted to exploring important and timely ideas from a variety of perspectives and to stimulating reflection and public conversation.
- **Public Program Grants** provide financial support for nonprofit organizations and tribes across Oregon to conceive and implement public humanities programs.
- **Responsive Program Grants** support public programs created by Oregon nonprofits and tribes in response to timely issues and events.
- **Facilitation Training** equips community members and workplace teams with skills in planning and leading reflective discussions.
- Oregon Humanities also convenes **reading and discussion groups**, hosts **panel presentations** on topics of public relevance and concern, and **collaborates** with nonprofit organizations and community groups on **responsive initiatives** that explore challenging questions and invite diverse perspectives.

Confirmed community partners for this grant include the following organizations, all of which have committed to hosting OH community conversations during the proposed grant period.

- **Asante Health/Rogue Regional Medical Center**, Medford (Jackson County): two-year program partner
- **Astoria Public Library**, Astoria (Clatsop County): seven-year program partner
- **Deschutes Public Library**, Bend (Deschutes County): ten-year program partner
- **Eastern Oregon University**, La Grande (Union County): eight-year program partner
- **Glenn & Viola Cultural Arts Center**, Hillsboro (Washington County): two-year program partner
- **Josephine Community Libraries**, Grants Pass (Josephine County): six-year program partner
- **Mt. Hood Community College**, Gresham (Multnomah County): four-year program partner
- **Oregon Community Foundation**, Portland (statewide): host for Vote, Talk, Lead conversations for emerging Latino leaders; partner for nineteen statewide conversations on arts integration; participant in OH's open call facilitation trainings. *Confirmed role also includes consulting on Spanish-language program development and outreach.*
- **Rogue Community College**, White City (Jackson County): four-year program partner
- **Tillamook County Pioneer Museum**, Tillamook (Tillamook County): seven-year program partner

## K. Project team

The project team will be led by Project Director **Adam Davis**. Davis joined Oregon Humanities in August 2013 as the organization's fifth executive director. In his previous work as director of the Center for Civic Reflection, Davis trained thousands of discussion leaders and developed broadly implemented discussion programs for service, education, and social justice networks and organizations. He has also written facilitation toolkits and online resources, edited *Taking Action* (2012) and *Hearing the Call across Traditions* (2009), and coedited *Talking Service* (2008) and *The Civically Engaged Reader* (2006). Davis brings these skills in building partnerships, training facilitators, and bringing focus and leadership to the team.

**Kathleen Holt**, associate director and editor of *Oregon Humanities* magazine, has been with Oregon Humanities since 2001 developing print and online communications strategies and managing projects. These projects have included the organization's 2009 rebranding, two website redesigns, an anthology written by and about Oregon's Native American community, and several video productions. In addition, she was a key member of the team that developed OH's vision and business plan, and leads ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion planning work. Holt brings a connection to the themes of the project and networks that challenge and strengthen the ideas and inquiry at the core of public

conversation. As magazine editor she is also responsible for the delivery of these themes as written and online content, furthering the conversation in additional ways.

Through her current programmatic and evaluative role in OH's This Place series of programs, which are funded in large part by an NEH Common Good: Humanities in the Public Square grant, **Annie Kaffen** brings direct program experience to the Public Humanities Project. Kaffen has been a part of the program team at Oregon Humanities since 2007. In her current role as program officer, she oversees statewide grantmaking and manages public programs from planning and budgeting through execution and evaluation. Kaffen brings more than a decade of nonprofit experience, including eight years of statewide relationship cultivation, to her work with OH. She previously served on the Federation of State Humanities Councils' NEH Compliance Report Data Advisory Group and has been involved in the analysis of other state humanities councils' conversation-based programming. Kaffen will manage the implementation of the proposed project.

**Rachel Bernstein** joined Oregon Humanities in 2015 as the organization's first partnership and training manager. In her current role she builds and strengthens partnerships across the state, and recruits, trains, and supports discussion facilitators. For the past decade her work has focused on building the civic capacity and engagement of coalitions, organizations, groups, and individuals. Her workshops and trainings have focused on creating space for participants to learn about and advance issues of equity, social justice, and intersectionality. Bernstein will strengthen and support the project team by managing and facilitating training workshops for leaders, convening debrief meetings for the humanities scholars, and providing ongoing support to cohorts.

#### **L. Humanities scholars and consultants**

The following scholars have confirmed their participation in OH's community conversation work and will advise OH on content, format, and program partnerships as advisory group members. Individuals marked with an asterisk (\*) are also part of OH's current roster of discussion leaders.

- Robert Arellano, PhD (Prof. Cuban Studies, Digital Humanities, Southern Oregon University)
- Edwin Battistella, PhD (Prof. of English, Southern Oregon University)
- Rev. Andrea Cano, MDV (Clinical Chaplain, Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital)\*
- Prakash Chenjeri, PhD (Prof. of Philosophy, Chair, Southern Oregon University)\*
- Michael Fakhri, PhD (Associate Prof., Oregon University School of Law)\*
- Rev. Fred Grewe, PhD (Chaplain for Hospice, Providence Hospice Medford)\*
- David Gutterman, PhD (Prof. Department of Politics, Willamette University)
- Yasmeen Hanoosh, PhD (Associate Prof. of Arabic, Portland State University)\*
- Nan Laurence, MA, MRP (Senior City Planner, Community Development Division, City of Eugene)\*
- David Osborn, PhD (Adjunct Professor, University Studies, Portland State University; Owner, Wapato Valley Process and Facilitation Support)\*
- Jennifer Sasser, PhD (Educational Gerontologist, Gerontology Instructor, Portland Community College)\*
- Ryan Stroud, MS (Founder, Director, CommuniTalks)\*
- Wendy Willis, PhD (Executive Director, Kitchen Table Democracy)\*

#### **M) Work Plan**

The expansion of OH's community conversation work will take place over three years, beginning with existing partners and discussion leaders and expanding to include new partners and discussion leaders during the grant period. *Note: The work plan outlined below would—with some adjustments where necessary—generally be duplicated year to year.*

April 2017:

- OH project team assembles to review and finalize goals, roles, timelines, activities, and evaluation tools for 2017–18 community conversation work; begins assembling collateral for 2017–18 Conversation Project catalog; translates materials to Spanish, as applicable

- Humanities advisory group advises project team on humanities content to be integrated into all community conversations and educational toolkits, as applicable to upcoming Conversation Project programs and responsive initiatives
- OH project team begins hiring process for the NEH-supported Position in Public Humanities
- OH project team, led by Partnership and Training Manager Rachel Bernstein, holds discussion leader roundtable

#### May-June 2017:

- OH project team is complete with new Position in the Public Humanities hire
- Executive Director Adam Davis attends the NEH project director's meeting in Washington, DC
- OH project team, in consultation with humanities advisory group, recruits responsive initiative discussion leaders, interviews and selects new responsive initiative discussion leaders, and establishes/develops relationships with potential partner organizations for 2017 responsive initiative
- NEH Position in the Public Humanities: Conversation Project program coordinator engages in statewide outreach and partnership development focused on rural and Spanish-speaking communities. These meetings will ensure OH understands the needs of program partners and can design all upcoming community conversations appropriately and responsively.

#### July 2017:

- OH project team publishes 2017–18 Conversation Project catalog for nonprofit and community groups statewide
- Conversation Project and responsive initiative discussion leader cohort trainings led by Executive Director Adam Davis and Partnership and Training Manager Rachel Bernstein. Over the course of the day leaders will gather to practice and learn various techniques for leading public discussions and refine humanities content of community conversations and educational toolkits.
- NEH Position in the Public Humanities: Conversation Project program coordinator engages in statewide outreach and partnership development focused on rural and Spanish-speaking communities.
- OH project team evaluate most recent year of Conversation Project programs against intended goals, objectives, and outcomes
- OH project team, led by Partnership and Training Manager Rachel Bernstein, holds discussion leader roundtable

#### August–September 2017:

- Program partners begin hosting Conversation Project and responsive initiative programs
- OH project team checks in as needed (including site visits) with program partners and discussion leaders regarding program evaluation and progress toward intended goals and outcomes
- OH project team continues broad statewide publicity
- NEH Position in the Public Humanities: Conversation Project program coordinator continues to engage in statewide outreach and partnership development focused on rural and Spanish-speaking communities.

#### October 2017:

- Program partners continue hosting Conversation Project and responsive initiative programs
- OH project team checks in as needed (including site visits) with program partners and discussion leaders regarding program evaluation and progress toward intended goals and outcomes
- OH project team writes and delivers interim report and evaluation to date for the first six months of NEH grant. This evaluation also corresponds to the OH fiscal year and will include reporting to the OH board of directors as a narrative evaluative program summary.
- OH project team, led by Partnership and Training Manager Rachel Bernstein, holds discussion leader roundtable

#### November 2017:

- Program partners continue hosting Conversation Project programs

- OH project team checks in as needed (including site visits) with program partners and discussion leaders regarding program evaluation and progress toward intended goals and outcomes

December 2017:

- Program partners continue hosting Conversation Project programs
- OH project team checks in as needed (including site visits) with program partners and discussion leaders regarding program evaluation and progress toward intended goals and outcomes

January–February 2018:

- OH project team, humanities advisory group, and a selection of discussion leaders and program partners meet to determine 2018 responsive initiative theme based on timely issues and/or concerns to Oregonians
- OH project team and current cohort of responsive initiative discussion leaders meet to debrief series, assess progress toward goals, and determine impact of humanities content on public audiences
- OH project team distributes open request for proposals for 2018–19 Conversation Project catalog and 2018 responsive initiative
- Program partners continue hosting Conversation Project programs
- OH project team checks in as needed (including site visits) with program partners and discussion leaders regarding program evaluation and progress toward intended goals and outcomes
- OH project team evaluates most recent responsive initiative
- OH project team, led by Partnership and Training Manager Rachel Bernstein, holds discussion leader roundtable

March 2018:

- OH project team writes and submits annual report and evaluation to date for the first year of NEH grant
- OH project team reviews goals, roles, timelines, activities, and evaluation. Humanities advisory group and OH project team meet to review project results to date and discuss potential adjustments to the plan and resources in Year 2.

*Other important dates during the grant period:*

April 2019:

- OH project team reviews goals, roles, timelines, activities, and evaluation. Humanities advisory group and OH project team meet to review project results to date and discuss potential adjustments to the plan and resources in Year 3.

March 2020:

- End of three-year grant period. Humanities advisory group and OH project team meet to review final results of project; submit written report to NEH.

## **N) Project Funding**

Oregon Humanities requests \$450,000 for support of OH's community conversation project over three years. This request includes \$285,500 in NEH outright funds, \$104,500 in NEH Federal Matching Funds, and \$60,000 for a Position in the Public Humanities. The total project cost is \$569,500. The project costs in excess of NEH funds totals Federal Matching Funds of \$104,500 comprised of \$64,500 in third-party foundation grants and \$40,000 in third-party partner funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust with an additional \$15,000 in project revenue cost share. The third-party foundation grants from the Kinsman Foundation, Rose E. Tucker Charitable Trust, and the Oregon Cultural Trust partner grants are all established donors that have given reliably over the past decade.