



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

OFFICE OF CHALLENGE GRANTS

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 Humanities Access application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/challenge/humanitiesaccess-grants> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Office of Challenge Grants 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 of the narrative, primarily in the budget category, may refer to 2016 guidelines that are no longer pertinent. Finally, some parts 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: Young Readers Initiative Expansion

Institution: South Dakota Humanities Council

Project Director: Jennifer Widman

Grant Program: Humanities Access

Describe the humanities activity or program that the grant would support, including its genesis, history, and goals. Include evidence of the program’s significant humanities content and intellectual value.

The South Dakota Humanities Council (SDHC) is applying for an NEH Access Grant that will provide three years of programming support for an expansion of our Young Readers Initiative. The SDHC will reach more young readers, and specifically those on all nine South Dakota American Indian reservations, as well as Spanish-speaking English Language Learners through translated educational resources. In 2019, efforts will include selecting a One Book by a tribal writer to distribute to our Young Readers constituency, increasing exposure to American Indian culture for all participating second-graders. Through our grants program, the SDHC will work with reservation communities to facilitate travel to the Young Readers Festival for students who have read the One Book. Expansion efforts will include serving an additional 2,000 students on the nine South Dakota reservations. In all, the SDHC’s goal is distribution of books to approximately 5,700 second-graders and a significantly larger number of schools and communities involved in Young Readers events. Launched in 2014, the Young Readers Initiative is a multi-faceted program aimed at engaging South Dakota youth in the humanities, particularly literature. The process of receiving a book, reading and discussing that book, and then meeting the author allows students to examine a story from several perspectives, including their own, their peers’, and the author’s. Along with the chance to meet other notable literary figures, this is a step toward thoughtful reading and civil conversation, two primary elements of the SDHC’s mission.

Genesis: In 2014, during conversations about securing a major national author for the Festival, Candlewick Press proposed options to put more books into the hands of youth. At the same time, the SDHC, along with teachers, administrators, librarians, and youth organizations, began discussing ways to combat the “summer slide,” the decline in reading skills over the summer vacation. Those discussions led to a multi-faceted approach incorporating a book giveaway, a reading guide, author visits to schools, a Young Readers Festival of Books, and support for schools, especially those on the state’s reservations and other areas of high need, to attend the Festival. Since its creation as a community-identified need, the Young Readers Initiative has steadily increased the number of youth served.

History: In 2014 the SDHC distributed over 3,000 copies of the inaugural Young Readers One Book South Dakota, Kate DiCamillo’s *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. The following year, the SDHC distributed 3,700 copies of a special bind-in of two books by Megan McDonald entitled *Stink: Twice as Incredible*. In 2016 the SDHC will distribute more than 5,000 copies of a four-book bind-in, *Andy Shane and Dolores Starbuckle: 4 Books in 1* by Jennifer Richard Jacobsen, to youth in more than eight communities throughout South Dakota. Each year, the Young Readers One Book author not only speaks to students who have received the book, but also joins a dynamic lineup of children’s authors at the Young Readers Festival of Books, which features multiple events creating excitement for reading.

Goal 1: Encourage further reading and promote textual understanding - Text-to-text connections are made whenever youth read one story and connect it to others they have read. A bind-in of multiple titles by the same author, as done in 2015 and 2016, featuring the same characters encountering new situations, encourages further reading. Targeted content creates text-to-self connections. Our partner educators and librarians selected Jennifer Richard Jacobson as the One Book author because of the relevance of her material to South Dakota youth; one of the stories featured in the bind-in, *Andy Shane and the Barn Sale Mystery*, includes familiar settings, themes, and topics for those in rural areas.

Goal 2: Cultural inclusivity and diversity - In 2019 the SDHC will select a One Book by a tribal writer to distribute to our Young Readers constituency, increasing exposure to American Indian culture. In addition to the One Book, the Young Readers Festival annually features multiple significant tribal voices, including S.D. Nelson, Donald Montileaux, Joseph Bruchac, and Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve. In 2016, the SDHC will partner with South Dakota State University to translate the Parent Guide and supplemental educational resources into Spanish. This will better serve the growing population of Spanish-speaking English Language Learners in South Dakota schools. These components are aimed at beginning civil conversations on race, culture, and inclusivity.

Goal 3: Including families - The SDHC utilizes local educators to produce guides to accompany the Young Readers One Book. Guides allow youth to take the tools of learning home and continue the learning process through family conversations, creating a closer bond between home and school.

Goal 4: Support for teachers - 2016 Young Readers One Book Author Jennifer Richard Jacobson has a commitment to professional development for educational staff. In addition to talking about her books with youth, Jacobson will conduct in-service training for South Dakota educators. The SDHC will further support educators through trainings on engaging young readers with materials.

Goal 5: Creating excitement for reading and writing - This year's Young Readers Festival will culminate with Jacobson speaking to youth and their families in Brookings, Sioux Falls and Rapid City. The anticipation of meeting authors creates excitement about reading and writing. Book giveaways put books into homes, ensuring materials are available and fostering responsibility through ownership.

By combining these elements – book giveaways, school and home resources, and presentations by significant literary figures – the Young Readers Festival creates meaningful learning experiences for thousands of South Dakota youth and their families. The SDHC plans not only to continue offering these opportunities for young readers, but also to increase the number of communities served and facilitate opportunities for new youth to come to the Festival.

Intellectual significance: Presenters include a wide array of respected authors and illustrators, including significant humanities scholars such as National Ambassador for Young People's Literature and two-time Newbery Medalist Kate DiCamillo, National Humanities Medalist Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, and National Book Award winners Pete Hautman and Sherman Alexie.

The intellectual significance extends beyond the caliber of our presenters to important content that promotes discussion on pertinent topics – race, culture, history, experience, understanding, and inclusivity, to name a few. Examples include Ann Bausum, writer for National Geographic Books, whose work includes *Stonewall: Breaking Out in the Fight for Gay Rights* and *Freedom Riders*; Don Montileaux's *Tasunka*, a retelling of the horse legend in both English and Lakota; and Sonia Manzano's *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* on the Latina-American experience.

Discuss the connection between the humanities activities and the needs and capacities of one or more of the following groups: youth, communities of color, or economically disadvantaged populations. Include information about previous efforts by your institution to reach and serve these groups.

Youth: The Young Readers Initiative is a response to a community-identified need and a plan to reach South Dakota youth, a demographic previously underserved by the South Dakota Humanities Council, with quality humanities programming. All facets of the Young Readers Initiative engage youth, seeking to reach them in schools, homes, after-school programs and special events.

Communities of color: One major part of the expansion of the Young Readers initiative is to bring existing events to South Dakota's nine reservations. According to census data, American Indians make up South Dakota's largest minority at about 9% of the population. One purpose of the expansion is to include youth on all nine American Indian reservations in South Dakota. Further, the SDHC is ensuring access to educational materials for families of a growing South Dakota minority, English Language Learners (ELL), in particular those who speak Spanish as a first language. This year, materials will be available in Spanish for Spanish-speaking ELL students and their families to ensure inclusion.

Economically disadvantaged: American Indians are not only the state's largest minority population, but also the most economically disadvantaged. South Dakota is home to three of the 10 counties with the highest poverty rates in the nation: Oglala Lakota County (formerly Shannon County), representing the Pine Ridge Reservation; Todd County, representing the Rosebud Reservation; and Corson County, representing the Standing Rock Reservation. Resources and opportunities such as meeting significant authors and humanities scholars are often limited in these communities.

Previous efforts: The SDHC has a history of successful efforts distributing tribal books to the reservations and partnering with tribal authors, students, and schools for Festival events. On South Dakota reservations, in many circumstances tribal college libraries double as the public libraries. Experiences in

2011 and 2012 demonstrated that tribal college library networks will be essential to helping the SDHC reach reservation schools. In 2011, the SDHC chose Joseph Marshall's *The Journey of Crazy Horse: A Lakota History* as the One Book South Dakota, with a giveaway to 2,400 tribal high school students. Marshall was then a keynote presenter at the Festival. In 2012, the SDHC gave away 2,000 copies of Sherman Alexie's National Book Award-winning *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* to tribal middle schools. Alexie then made an appearance in front of nearly 4,000 readers at South Dakota State University as a special kick-off event for the South Dakota Festival of Books. In each case, several groups of tribal students who received the book then attended the Festival presentations.

The SDHC will utilize existing relationships with the Department of Education, forged through partnerships on summer Teacher Institutes with the goal of "Indian Education for all," to include tribal schools and book distribution services on a larger scale. This goal will guide the SDHC in selecting a writer and book with cultural relevance to South Dakota tribes as the 2019 Young Readers One Book. The SDHC is supporting travel funds to bring reservation youth to the Festival in 2016, and will evaluate our grants program as a strategic mechanism to continue these program goals.

Explain how the institution, through its mission, personnel, governance, facilities, and resources, has been and will be capable of sustaining outstanding humanities activities over the long term. Identify any collaborators or partners.

Mission: The mission of the South Dakota Humanities Council is to celebrate literature, promote civil conversation and tell the stories that define our state. This initiative fulfills all three elements of SDHC's mission, especially celebrating literature. The Young Readers Initiative also addresses the SDHC's first strategic priority, "expand the community of readers and writers throughout South Dakota." Our work with youth will not only increase the number of South Dakotans served, but will introduce the next generation to the work of the SDHC and the role of the humanities in our state.

Personnel: Jennifer Widman, Director of the Center for the Book, will lead the SDHC's efforts on the Young Readers Initiative, working with publishers, authors, venues and volunteers to ensure the success of each component. Sherry DeBoer, Executive Director, will provide crucial background and guidance. She was instrumental in forging SDHC's relationships with educational and cultural institutions, including those used to distribute books to reservation students in 2011 and 2012. Kyle Schaefer, Program and Development Officer, will help facilitate book distribution and author visits, as well as collect program data. Sherry and Kyle's involvement in programming will help them craft stories and relationships that will help facilitate successful fundraising efforts.

Governance: The SDHC Board has affirmed that Young Readers events meet the mission and strategic priorities of the SDHC and has directed organizational resources to continue and, when possible, expand Young Readers programming. Furthermore, they have committed staff time and budgetary resources to continue this work.

Facilities: The SDHC does not have any of our own event facilities, but has relationships with multiple entities that have facilities, often offered to the SDHC at reduced or free rates.

Resources: As our third year of the Young Readers Initiative comes to fruition, the SDHC has established the resources needed to do this work. The excitement of an expansion has brought new volunteers, partners, and potential donors to the table.

Sustainability: The Young Readers Initiative began in 2014 and has steadily grown each year. Because many of the mechanisms of Young Readers programming are in place – through establishing and then growing a successful Festival and One Book – the SDHC is uniquely capable of carrying out this work. This experience has afforded the SDHC an understanding of the needs for facilities, personnel, logistics, and fundraising to produce a successful Festival. We now have a unique opportunity to grow the project and ultimately serve more youth, especially more reservation youth. This growth will not only expose our programs to new audiences, but also provide connections to new project partners and donors.

Collaborators: The SDHC has established relationships with authors, publishers, partners, and venues that are critical to the continued success of the Young Readers Festival. Since 2014, relationships

with schools, children’s librarians, and youth organizations have strengthened. Venue partnerships with the Children’s Museum of South Dakota and the Washington Pavilion museums have offered reduced-rate or free event spaces for youth literacy activities. The Rapid City Public School Foundation and the district’s curriculum personnel voluntarily create the reading guide, deliver authors to schools, and chaperone events. We are working with the South Dakota State Historical Society Press to publish the 2019 Young Readers One Book. Ideally, renowned tribal illustrator Donald Montileaux would visually augment a text based on a 1950s oral history collection of a tribal elder’s childhood recollections. SDHC has annually worked with a strong network of enthusiastic volunteers who are critical to our success.

Describe the institution’s fundraising strategy to achieve the required match in the first two years of the grant, and delineate clearly and in detail the planned grant expenditures in years three to five.

Fundraising Strategy: Because books can physically bear the name and logo of a sponsor, the SDHC has had tremendous success in securing multiple major sponsors for books, especially those directed towards Young Readers. (b) (4)

[Redacted] are all past donors on whom we will rely to make this effort a success.

The SDHC has a team in place to secure the funds needed to reach the matching grant goals and then to continue to support these programs long-term. The SDHC Executive Director, Sherry DeBoer, has a passion for the programs and the relationships and skills to raise funds for them. Kyle Schaefer, Program and Development Officer, has rearranged his duties for the SDHC to concentrate on fundraising, and Brian Bonde, the SDHC’s fundraising consultant, will assist in reaching goals.

2017: In addition to those who regularly support the SDHC, we have identified new potential sources of revenue, including the (b) (4), the (b) (4), and (b) (4). We will make requests through grant proposals to each of these three entities for this initiative in 2017. We believe that the combination of literacy, the impact on American Indian youth, and the SDHC’s track record of meaningful literary events will culminate in meeting fundraising goals. We will ask existing partners, including those to whom we have already introduced the expansion idea, such as (b) (4), as well as other loyal supporters of our work, such as (b) (4), for commitments to the matching grant as a part of our strategy to secure the required \$50,000 match in 2017.

2018: In the second year of fundraising, the SDHC will approach (b) (4). We will closely monitor our fundraising trends and meet any shortfalls through individual requests to donors who support Young Readers programming and, if necessary, a targeted mailing to those most closely involved. The efforts of the SDHC, combined with a successful NEH Grant and 1-to-1 matching opportunity, will pave the way for the SDHC to reach additional youth and minority audiences in South Dakota. The exposure afforded through NEH funds will open doors for funding from a number of additional potential sponsors. The SDHC is confident in our ability to raise the \$50,000 again in 2018.

Investment Strategy: (b) (4)

Planned grant expenditures - 2019: In 2019 the SDHC will spend \$19,225 on direct program costs. Those dollars will support the presentations of significant humanities scholars at the Young

Readers Festival of Books, specifically the Young Readers One Book author, which will be a tribal writer and/or illustrator. Significant humanities scholars come at a major price. In addition to scholars, other direct program costs include facility rental fees, postage, and telecommunications. \$11,800 will be spent as a portion of the SDHC staff salaries and benefits needed to carry out this work. The SDHC will spend \$12,000 on printing Young Readers guides and advertising for Young Readers events. In 2019 the SDHC anticipates book costs will be \$26,475 for the Young Readers One Book (5,295 books X \$5 unit cost). We anticipate a higher-than-usual unit cost of closer to five dollars, but we feel it is worth the extra expense to partner with the South Dakota State Historical Society Press on a book written by a South Dakota tribal writer. The requested program budget in 2019 is \$69,500.

2020: In 2020 the SDHC will spend \$19,225 on direct program costs, the majority of which goes to scholar stipends and travel. Other costs include \$21,775 on salaries and benefits for staff, \$12,000 on printing guides and advertising for Young Readers events, and \$16,500 on books (5,500 books X \$3 unit cost). We anticipate being able to work with a larger publisher in order to secure a smaller unit cost for books in 2020. The total requested program budget is \$69,500. In 2020 the SDHC will again pursue support over and above our specific budgeted costs, with extra dollars affording opportunities to bring in more scholars, include more schools, and bring more books to youth.

2021: In 2021 the SDHC will again spend \$19,225 on scholar stipends and travel and other direct program costs, including \$22,390 on salaries and benefits for staff, \$12,000 on printing and advertising for Young Readers events, and \$15,885 on books (5,295 books X \$3 unit cost). The total requested program budget in 2021 will be \$69,500.

Provide a plan for assessing and measuring, in both qualitative and quantitative terms as appropriate, the impact of the grant.

The SDHC has a varied plan for assessing and measuring Young Readers events. The SDHC and partners will collect qualitative data from youth surveys distributed by teachers, from teachers evaluations distributed by the SDHC, and by participant and presenter evaluations distributed at events. Quantitative data will be collected from participating school districts, at events, and coordinator evaluations.

Qualitative data: As in 2014 and 2015, evaluations will be administered by the Sioux Falls and Brookings school districts. Students are asked about the number of books they read, their favorite authors, lessons learned from presenters, and library card ownership. Surveys give us a basis for understanding relationships between youth and reading, writing, and books. Data is also collected by project partner Mike Mogard at the Children's Museum of South Dakota. Mogard evaluates the SDHC and the program from the role of a partner organization and project coordinator. The results of these surveys shape the way we pair classes with authors, encourage conversations about selecting space for events, and reaffirm the value of each component of the Young Readers Initiative. Evaluations provided some information we had not anticipated and helped define a road map for improvement, such as the need for Spanish translations.

Quantitative data will be collected through measures such as the number of youth who receive books, the number of youth present at author sessions, and the number of presentations youth participate in. School districts annually collect data profiles based on ethnicity and income, including students who qualify for free or reduced rate lunches. For example, the Sioux Falls School District reported to the SDHC that a school presentation during the 2014 Young Readers Festival by Native author Joseph Bruchac had an audience of 50 students with a make-up that was 75% white, 14% Native American, and 4% multiracial, and of those students 50% qualified for free or reduced lunch. This information helps the SDHC in targeting program goals. If food security is an issue in homes, the availability of expendable income for books is far less likely. If American Indian student populations represent 14% of a class demographic, connecting those students with an American Indian author and role model is a targeted opportunity. Books in homes, coupled with youth expectations of meeting high caliber authors, serve as components to get kids reading.