

2019 Democracy and the Informed Citizen Initiative

Request for Proposals

Description

The 2019 Democracy and the Informed Citizen Initiative invites state humanities councils to design projects that examine the essential role that journalism and the humanities play to create an informed citizenry, the foundation of our democracy. Administered by the Federation of State Humanities Council with a \$1.75 million grant from the Mellon Foundation, Informed Citizen proposals will examine such themes as:

- the historical and constitutional foundations of a free press
- the critical role the humanities and journalism play in shaping the judgements and opinions of citizens in a democratic society
- the shifting media landscape and how it affects our ability to access information, assess its credibility, and analyze its significance
- the endangered state of local media and local news
- the role media plays in raising and defining local and statewide issues

The goals of the initiative, as outlined in the proposal submitted to the Mellon Foundation (attached), are the following:

- Deepen the public's knowledge and appreciation of the intimate connections between democracy, the humanities, journalism, and an informed citizenry, based on the following premises: 1) A healthy democracy requires an informed citizenry. 2) The humanities and journalism play a vital role in fostering an informed citizenry. 3) Informed citizens are media literate.
- Increase media literacy by engaging the public in discussions with Pulitzer Prize winners and finalists in journalism, other respected journalists, and scholars about reliable and unreliable sources of information.
- Expand support for local journalism by creating opportunities for local journalists to engage directly with community members to address issues of concern.

For their 2017 Informed Citizen projects (see attached proposal descriptions), councils collaborated with a wide array of partners to address such challenging topics as freedom of speech, civil rights, the environment, criminal justice, community development, the contraction and demise of local newspapers and local news, and media literacy. Nearly 100 Pulitzer Prize-winning writers participated in these projects along with humanities scholars, civic leaders, educators, and representatives from a diverse array of media platforms.

Councils are encouraged to engage Pulitzer Prize winners and finalists in their programs. The Pulitzer Prizes office is, once again, eager to help councils connect with Pulitzer authors.

Councils are also urged to partner with college and university humanities departments to create projects that examine Informed Citizen themes from humanities perspectives and disciplines, employing such

methods as critical thinking, historical perspective, deep analysis, and personal reflection. Questions to consider are:

- How do citizens arrive at the “truth” in an age of conflicting “facts”?
- How do our personal experiences and perspectives enter into our analysis of the media and information we consume?
- What are the historical and philosophical foundations of a free press and how do they apply to the new media landscape?
- How has local news been challenged by a global array of media sources?
- How does the proliferation of information and news sources prevent us from achieving shared values, a common sense of identity and purpose, and consensus on critical issues?

Funding Requests

The Federation will award \$1.5 million in grants awards, to be distributed among proposals from the 56 states and territories that make up its membership. Funding awards will be made based on the number of proposals received and the amount of funds requested.

LOIs must be submitted through the Submittable online system by August 23, 2019. All applicants are required to set up an online account to submit their LOI. If your organization is already using the Submittable online system, you may use your current login credentials. If you do not have an account, you will be directed to create one. [Click here](#) to access the Letter of Intent.

Timeline:

July 17	Federation Issues Request for Proposals
July 24 & 31	Federation conference calls to brainstorm proposal ideas
August 23	Deadline to submit Letter of Intent (Letters of Intent will be reviewed and responded to as received)
October 18	Deadline to submit final grant
Mid-November	Grant review panels meet
Early December	Federation announces awards
Jan 2020-June 2021	Councils conduct programs

General Questions and Assistance:

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