



# FOREGROUND RURAL INITIATIVE

**Illinois Humanities is excited to announce its new Foreground Rural Initiative!**  
This three-year project seeks to strengthen the civic fabric of our state by amplifying the voices and experiences of rural communities through the arts and humanities.

Illinois Humanities, the Illinois affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, is a statewide nonprofit organization that activates the humanities through free public programs, grants, and educational opportunities that foster reflection, spark conversation, build community, and strengthen civic engagement. We provide free, high-quality humanities experiences throughout Illinois, particularly for communities of color, individuals living on low incomes, counties and towns in rural areas, small arts and cultural organizations, and communities highly impacted by mass incarceration.

## WHY RURAL?

*“People are hungry for things to fill their soul,”* said a resident of Fulton County in West Central Illinois. *“They are starved for community, culture, things that make us laugh, feel, and connect.”*

Rural and small-town nonprofits are overlooked disproportionately in funding, capacity building, and convening opportunities. The Foreground Rural Initiative will not only increase grantmaking in rural Illinois communities to support organizations and individuals working in the humanities, but will also strengthen these efforts through capacity building, civic engagement, and peer skill sharing over the course of three years.

### The goals of this three-year effort are —

- Provide grant funding to support the humanities in rural Illinois communities.
- Strengthen humanities and arts organizations through capacity building, civic engagement, and peer skill sharing over three years.
- Pilot a community-based “hubs” strategy to bolster the existing arts and humanities work in rural communities across Illinois.
- Strengthen existing partnerships with rural organizations and initiate new ones using an equity- and needs-based rubric for applications from individuals and organizations that serve and/or represent geographically isolated communities; Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities; immigrants; youth; and predominantly low-income communities.
- Explore new partnerships with national, state, and local agencies and organizations to deepen our impact and expand our outreach in rural communities.



## FOREGROUND RURAL INITIATIVE GRANTS

This initiative will partner with individuals and organizations in rural communities through grantmaking, capacity building, and co-created programming.

### How it works —

**Grants:** Illinois Humanities is offering general, unrestricted grants of \$5,000 for eligible individuals and \$10,000 for eligible groups and organizations that are engaged in cultural work in rural Illinois communities.

**Eligibility:** Applicants must be rural, tax-exempt organizations or individuals based in Illinois. Eligible groups include rural humanities, cultural, and/or arts nonprofits, as well as public libraries, public high schools, chambers of commerce, civic groups, and groups working in economic development that are harnessing cultural work as a core part of their programming.

**Criteria:** We are looking for applications from organizations or individuals that demonstrate commitment to the humanities, an interest and willingness to partner with others, a proven track record of inspiring civic engagement, and a strong connection to community — especially historically under-resourced communities.

**Timeline:** **The application deadline is Monday, August 1, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. CST.** To access the individual or organizational application or learn more about grant offerings, visit [ilhumanities.org/Foreground](https://ilhumanities.org/Foreground).

**Awardees will be notified by September 15, 2022.** In October and November, we will organize check-ins with grantee partners to learn more about their work and the communities they work in and explore further programmatic partnerships.

## LEARN MORE

For general questions about the Foreground Rural Initiative, please contact Fairouz AbuGhazaleh, director of statewide programs, at [fairouz.abughazaleh@ilhumanities.org](mailto:fairouz.abughazaleh@ilhumanities.org). For questions about the grant application process or eligibility, please contact Mark Hallett, director of grants programs, at [mark.hallett@ilhumanities.org](mailto:mark.hallett@ilhumanities.org).