



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Wyoming Humanities Launches Wyoming Crossroads Fund and Emergency Relief Grants for Cultural Organizations**

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Wyoming Humanities announces the launch of the ***Wyoming Crossroads Fund***. This initiative will harness the power and creativity of Wyoming's cultural arts network to help the state address the social and economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic, combined with the ongoing dire downturn in Wyoming's energy industry, is forcing the Equality State to rapidly adapt its economy. The organization also launches emergency grants for cultural organizations affected by the COVID-19.

"Even before the societal and economic trauma caused by the pandemic, we in Wyoming realized we were at a crossroad," said Rev. Dr. Bernadine Craft, former state senator from Rock Springs and chair of Wyoming Humanities board of directors. "We all need to make some tough decisions as we work to determine the course of our state's future for years to come. We believe that the humanities and the arts can help us better understand our current situation through creative explorations of contemporary issues as well as grass-roots conversations about plans going forward."

Wyoming Humanities further believes that the creative sector of Wyoming's economy has tremendous potential to help the state's economic diversification goals as it seeks to attract new industries to our communities. Wyoming Humanities has worked closely with the Wyoming Arts Council and the Wyoming Arts Alliance to help educate the state's leaders on the importance of this economic sector. Shannon Smith, CEO of Wyoming Humanities, has focused on making the case: "With both public and private support, this sector could be grown to be 10% or more of our state's economy. A great deal of research documents the positive social and economic impact of artists and cultural workers on rural communities. Our Wyoming Crossroads Fund will underwrite projects to demonstrate the economic power of the creative sector."

The first grant line of the Wyoming Crossroads Fund will be the [\*\*\*Wyoming Cultural CARES emergency grants\*\*\*](#) to support operations in the state's cultural organizations. According to Wyoming Humanities COO, Shawn Reese, there is an urgent need to stabilize the institutions that tell our state's stories: "To protect and preserve the cultural network that will help us diversify our economy and form grass-roots conversations about our current and future issues, we must shore up those organizations that are being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic." Funding for these grants has been provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act economic stabilization plan. Wyoming Humanities received \$399,500 and will invest 100% of this NEH funding in cultural organizations throughout Wyoming.

Awards, intended for salary and operations support, will be between \$5,000 and \$15,000, based upon organizations' annual budget and level of need. There are no matching funds required. These are rapid-response grants, with the application process opening on Friday, May 8; all applications received by noon on Friday, May 15 will be considered in the first review. Notification of awards will be within seven days (no later than May 22). This rolling application process will remain open only while funding remains, with a weekly 12 pm Friday deadline and seven-day notification. Wyoming Humanities anticipates 2-3 weeks of reviewing applications. The needs of the state's cultural organizations will continue to be evaluated, and Wyoming Humanities may adjust funding guidelines accordingly. Other programs and grant lines are also being considered so that Wyoming Humanities continues to be as responsive as possible to the cultural network's needs in the state.

For more information and to apply for an emergency grant, go to [www.thinkwy.org](http://www.thinkwy.org).

#### **About Wyoming Humanities**

Wyoming Humanities is the Wyoming affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and is one of 55 state humanities councils. Conceived by a group of University of Wyoming leaders in 1970 and approved by the NEH in 1971, Wyoming Humanities is the oldest state humanities council. Their mission is to use the public humanities to strengthen Wyoming's democracy, expand the Wyoming narrative, and promote engaged communities. Wyoming Humanities is an independent nonprofit funded by the NEH, a state legislative appropriation, corporate and foundation grants, and private donations. Wyoming Humanities is headquartered in Laramie, WY with an office in Jackson's Center for the Arts. To learn more about Wyoming Humanities, visit [www.thinkwy.org](http://www.thinkwy.org).

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