

Project Title***Provide a short descriptive title for your proposed project.**

Stars, Stripes, and Sunshine - America 250: The Florida Experience - Celebrate Florida's journey in America's 250-year story. designed to engage residents in exploring Florida's unique contributions to the nation's history, culture, and future.

Project Summary:*

Provide a short description of your proposed project. The description should be written for a general public audience and include the amount of funds requested as well as a summary of the proposed public programs to be presented and/or humanities resources to be created. Please also note when programming is expected to occur. This description will serve as your project abstract during the review process.

The Hernando County Public Library System seeks funding in the amount of \$10,000 from Florida Humanities to present a year-long series of public programs exploring Florida's history, culture, and identity as part of the America 250 initiative. This project, tentatively titled *America 250: The Florida Experience*, will engage community members in meaningful conversations about the people, places, and events that have shaped both our state and the nation.

Programming will consist of a curated series of humanities-based events offered throughout the year, including scholar-led talks, panel discussions, exhibits, and interactive community programs developed in partnership with local organizations such as the Audubon Society and Chinsegut Conservation Center. Topics will highlight Florida's environmental history, cultural diversity, and regional identity, encouraging participants to reflect on their connection to place within the broader American story.

Programs are expected to take place from Summer 2026 through Spring 2027 and will be free and open to the public. The project will prioritize accessibility and sustained community engagement, creating ongoing opportunities for dialogue, learning, and reflection on Florida's unique role in the nation's past, present, and future.

Project Start Date*

Public events supported by grant funds may begin no sooner than six weeks after the grant period start date. If you are requesting funds for a single day event/program, please use the program date for your project start and end dates. Grant expenditures for program planning and development, however, may begin as soon as the grant period start date. Please consult the [grant guidelines](#) for the grant period for this funding cycle.

Project End Date*

Project end date should be the final date of the last proposed grant-funded activity or the grant period end date, whichever occurs first. Please consult the [grant guidelines](#) for the grant period for this funding cycle.

Amount Requested*

May not exceed \$10,000.

Did you consult with Florida Humanities staff about your project?*

Applicants with an approved LOI, particularly new applicants, are encouraged to schedule a brief virtual meeting with Florida Humanities staff before completing and submitting a final application. Please contact the Florida Humanities grants team at grants@flahum.org to schedule a meeting no later than two weeks prior to the application due date.

- Yes, I completed a virtual meeting with Florida Humanities staff.
- No, I did not complete a virtual meeting with Florida Humanities staff.

∨ Sponsoring Organization

Sponsoring Organization Name*

If approved, this is the name of the non-profit organization to which all grant funds will be made payable.

Sponsoring Organization Address Line One*

Sponsoring Organization Address Line Two*

Sponsoring Organization City*

Sponsoring Organization State*

Use two letter abbreviation.

Sponsoring Organization Postal Code*

Sponsoring Organization County*

Sponsoring Organization Business Phone*

Sponsoring Organization Website Address*

Sponsoring Organization Federal ID Number*

This number is issued by the IRS and is typically a 2-digit number followed by a dash and seven more digits.

Sponsoring Organization Unique Entity ID (SAM)*

All applicants are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (SAM) for the sponsoring organization through the sam.gov website. The SAM replaced the DUNS number in April 2022. Your organization's SAM will be no more than 12 alphanumeric characters. [Click here](#) for a step-by-step guide on how to get a Unique Entity ID (SAM).

Sponsoring Organization Annual Budget*

Is this Sponsoring Organization in a RAO area?*

Please refer to [this website](#) to determine if your county or city is categorized as a Rural Area of Opportunity.

- Yes, this organization is in a RAO area
- No, this organization is not in a RAO area

Organization Type*

Has your organization received funding from Florida Humanities in the past 10 years?*

- Yes
- No

How did you hear about funding opportunities from Florida Humanities?*

- Returning Applicant
- Independent Research (i.e. Google)
- Referred by Colleague/Friend
- Florida Humanities Email
- Postal Mailing
- Social Media
- Word of Mouth
- Conference or Workshop
- Other

Project Director

Project Director Salutation*

Dr. ▾

Project Director First Name*

Jennifer

Project Director Last Name*

Hodges

Project Director Business Title*

Branch Supervisor

Project Director Organizational Affiliation*

Hernando County Public Library

Project Director Address Line One*

9220 Spring Hill Dr

Project Director City*

SPRING HILL

Project Director State*

Use two letter abbreviation.

FL

Project Director Postal Code*

34608

Project Director Address Type*

Is this a home or business address?

- Home
- Business

Project Director Email*

Florida Humanities communicates primarily through email. Please provide an email address you check frequently.

 jhodges@co.hernando.fl.us

Project Director Email Type*

Is this a personal or business email address?

- Personal
- Business

Project Director Contact Number*

3527544043

Project Director Contact Number Type*

Is this a home, business, or cell number?

- Home
 Business
 Cell

∨ Federal Representative

U.S. Congressional District Number*

Florida currently has 28 U.S. Congressional districts. [Click here](#) to find the elected official for your community. Only enter a number between 1 and 28.

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U.S. Congressional District Representative Name*

Gus M. Billrakis

Narrative

Mission of the Organization and Relationship to the Humanities*

Describe the role the humanities play in your organization and how they are realized in your mission and ongoing activities. If the humanities are not central to the work of your organization, explain how the overall project will strengthen current or future public humanities work offered by your organization. Detail any prior Florida Humanities grant-funded projects.

The Hernando County Public Library serves as a vital public humanities resource, providing free and equitable access to knowledge, cultural enrichment, and lifelong learning. While the Library's mission broadly supports education and information access, the humanities are central to its role as a space where community members explore history, literature, culture, and civic life. Humanities engagement is realized through collections, programming, and community partnerships. The Library curates displays and reading lists that highlight historical and cultural themes, hosts discussion-based programs that encourage critical thinking and dialogue, and provides access to materials that support personal and collective understanding of the human experience.

Recent initiatives demonstrate the Library's commitment to interdisciplinary humanities work. Through the Science Across America project, the Library incorporated humanities perspectives into scientific topics, encouraging patrons to consider the historical development of scientific knowledge and its broader cultural impact. Additionally, the

Florida-Friendly Landscape Demonstration Garden offers an environmental humanities component by interpreting the relationship between people, place, and sustainability. The Library also serves as a gathering place for community-centered humanities engagement. Programs that focus on shared stories, local identity, and civic reflection foster meaningful connections among residents and create opportunities for dialogue across diverse perspectives. While not all Library services are exclusively humanities-focused, this project represents an opportunity to deepen and expand public humanities programming. By intentionally framing activities through a humanities lens—emphasizing storytelling, historical context, and cultural interpretation—the Library will strengthen its capacity to engage the public in reflective and participatory learning experiences. Support from Florida Humanities will build on the Library’s existing foundation, enhancing its ability to deliver inclusive, accessible humanities programming that reaches broad and underserved audiences.

Audience*

Describe your organization's current audience(s). Explain how the proposed programming will advance your audience reach and impact. If you propose to target a particular audience, explain why you have identified that particular audience and what specific need(s) within the community this project addresses. Florida Humanities is particularly interested in projects that reach underserved audiences or communities as well as projects that utilize appropriate accessibility accommodations when planning their programming. Provide an estimate of the total number of individuals to be served by this project.

The Hernando County Public Library serves a broad and diverse audience, including families, older adults, job seekers, students, and individuals with limited access to technology and educational resources. Many patrons rely on the Library not only for materials, but for guidance in navigating information, accessing digital tools, and participating in community life. A significant portion of the Library’s audience includes retirees, individuals on fixed incomes, and residents who may experience barriers related to transportation, digital literacy, or economic hardship. The proposed programming is designed to both deepen engagement with current users and expand outreach to underserved populations. This project will intentionally target older adults, individuals with limited digital access, and community members who may not typically participate in humanities programming. These audiences have been identified through daily public service interactions, community feedback, and observed gaps in participation, particularly among those who benefit most from free, accessible cultural and educational

opportunities. This project addresses several key community needs: access to meaningful cultural programming, opportunities for social connection, and inclusive spaces for lifelong learning. By offering humanities-based programs that are free, welcoming, and locally relevant, the Library will reduce barriers to participation and foster a greater sense of belonging and engagement within the community. Accessibility is a central component of program design. All programming will be offered at no cost and held in ADA-accessible spaces. Efforts will be made to provide clear, easy-to-understand materials, and staff will offer hands-on assistance to support participants with varying levels of digital and information literacy. When appropriate, programs will incorporate visual, auditory, and interactive elements to ensure multiple points of entry for engagement. Through this project, the Library anticipates serving approximately 500-750 individuals directly through programs and related activities, with additional indirect reach through displays, materials, and community awareness efforts. By expanding both reach and depth of engagement, this project will strengthen the Library's role as an inclusive public humanities resource.

Proposed Programming*

Provide a detailed description of all public events, materials, or programs that will be created by your project. Include the primary themes and topics to be addressed and how the project is firmly rooted in the humanities. Your description should clearly define all program topics, format(s), locations, and a timeline for completion of all activities from planning to implementation and project evaluation.

If your project addresses America's 250th (not required), explain how the proposed programming will provide opportunities for the public to learn about and reflect upon our nation's past including the many diverse peoples who contributed to the American story as well as your local history.

This project will present a series of interconnected public humanities programs designed to engage the community in exploring themes of American identity, local history, and the relationship between people, place, and shared cultural experiences. Hosted by the Hernando County Public Library the project will combine facilitated discussions, interpretive displays, and interactive public programming to create multiple entry points for engagement.

Primary themes include: the evolution of American identity, the contributions of diverse communities to the national story, the role of local environments in shaping cultural experience, and the importance of civic reflection in a democratic society. These themes are firmly rooted in the humanities, drawing on history, literature, cultural studies, and environmental humanities to encourage participants to reflect on both national narratives and their own lived experiences.

Programming will include a series of facilitated discussion programs centered on selected texts and themes related to American history and culture. These programs will be discussion-based rather than lecture-driven, emphasizing dialogue, interpretation, and shared perspectives. In addition, the Library will develop a curated collection and public display that integrates books, interpretive signage, and thematic prompts to encourage self-guided exploration.

Interactive elements will include community reflection activities, such as written response boards or journaling prompts, inviting participants to share their own perspectives on identity, place, and belonging. These contributions will become part of the evolving display, reinforcing the idea that public humanities are participatory and community-driven.

As part of the broader context of America's 250th anniversary, the project will provide opportunities for participants to engage with both national and local history. Programming will highlight the diverse peoples and perspectives that have shaped the American experience, while also drawing connections to the history and development of the local community. By connecting large-scale historical narratives to everyday lived experience, the project will foster deeper understanding and personal relevance.

Programs will be offered in accessible, in-person formats within the Library's public spaces, with materials designed to accommodate a wide range of literacy and engagement levels. The physical setting of the Library allows for both structured programs and informal, ongoing interaction with project materials.

The project timeline will include a planning phase (Months 1–3) focused on theme development, material selection, and program design; an implementation phase (Months 4–11) during which programs, displays, and activities will be launched and actively facilitated; and an evaluation phase (Month 12) that will assess participation, engagement, and community impact. Evaluation methods will include attendance tracking, participant feedback, and staff observations, which will inform future humanities programming.

Through this combination of structured programming and informal engagement, the project will create a sustained and meaningful public humanities experience that invites reflection, dialogue, and community connection.

Fees*

Florida Humanities gives preference to programming and resources that are free to the public. If applicable, detail any regular entry fees to your organization's facilities and any fees that will be charged for the proposed programming. If fees are charged, clearly explain all efforts to mitigate those costs for those for whom fees may pose a challenge or barrier for participation.

All programs and resources offered by the Hernando County Public Library are free to the public. The proposed project will follow this model. All programming, materials, and activities will be provided at no cost to participants. This ensures equitable access and removes financial barriers, particularly for underserved or economically disadvantaged community members. By maintaining a fully free and open-access structure, the Library supports inclusive participation and aligns with its mission to provide accessible educational and cultural opportunities for all.

Project Team*

List all members of your Project Team beginning with the Project Director. Include all individuals integral to the planning and implementation of your project as well as all scholars and program presenters. Your project team should include at least one humanities scholar or community expert such as a local historian or community elder.

For each individual, provide no more than a three-sentence description of their exact role in the project, their content area of expertise or other pertinent skills, and any relevant organizational affiliation(s). Florida Humanities strongly recommends that all key project team members have confirmed their planned participation in the proposed project at the time of application.

Dr. Jennifer Hodges, Project Director, Branch Supervisor, Spring Hill Branch Library

Jennifer will serve as Project Director, overseeing all aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation. She will coordinate staff, manage partnerships, and ensure alignment with humanities goals and grant requirements. As a library leader with extensive experience in

public programming, community engagement, and grant-funded initiatives, she brings strong organizational and outreach expertise.

Mary Sheldon, Community Partner / Local Humanities Resource

Mary Sheldon will serve as a community humanities advisor, contributing subject-matter insight and assisting in the development of program themes and content. She will support the identification of relevant local perspectives and help ensure programming reflects regional history and culture. Her experience and connection to the community strengthen the project's humanities foundation.

Dr. Tom St. Claire, Representative, Audubon Society (Hernando County Chapter)

Dr. St. Claire will assist in developing and supporting programs related to Florida's environmental history and natural resources. He will contribute expertise in conservation, birding, and ecological education, and may participate in select public programs. His involvement enhances the project's exploration of the relationship between people and the natural environment.

Colleen Muylaert, Education Specialist, Representative, Chinsegut Conservation Center

This partner will contribute educational support and potential program collaboration focused on Florida's environmental and cultural history. They will provide subject-matter expertise and assist with community engagement efforts. Their affiliation brings regional credibility and strengthens place-based learning opportunities.

Community Partners*

Identify all key organizational partners you expect to work with on the proposed project. This should include organizations that may provide staffing/volunteer support, financial support (cash or in-kind), assistance with delivery of programming or promotional activities, or development of program content.

The Library will collaborate with several key community partners to support the planning, promotion, and delivery of this project. The Audubon Society will provide subject-matter expertise and assist with programming related to Florida's environmental history, including potential volunteer support and community engagement. The Chinsegut Conservation Center will contribute educational resources, assist with program development, and support outreach efforts by connecting the project to regional environmental and cultural initiatives.

Additional support will be provided by Florida Humanities through the Florida Talks program, which will supply scholars and speakers to lead humanities-based discussions and presentations. Local humanities resource Mary Sheldon will contribute to content development and ensure that programming reflects regional history and community perspectives.

Together, these partners will provide a combination of in-kind support, content expertise, promotional assistance, and program delivery, strengthening the project's impact and ensuring meaningful community engagement.

Marketing and Promotion*

Describe all methods to be used to promote this project to the general public and/or to the targeted audience(s) identified above. Include specific media outlets (i.e. print, broadcast, social) and estimated reach for each.

The Library will implement a multi-channel marketing strategy to promote this project and ensure broad community awareness and participation. Promotion will include print, digital, and in-person outreach methods designed to reach both general and targeted audiences.

Print materials, including flyers, posters, and bookmarks, will be distributed within the library, at partner locations, and at high-traffic community sites such as local businesses and community centers, with an estimated reach of 2,000–3,000 individuals. The library will also utilize its website and event calendar, as well as the Hernando County Public Library System's online platforms, to provide detailed program information.

Digital outreach will include regular promotion through the library's social media channels (Facebook and Instagram), which collectively reach approximately 5,000+ followers, as well as targeted posts in local community groups to expand visibility. Email newsletters distributed through the library system will reach an estimated 3,000+ subscribers.

Community partners, including the Audubon Society and Chinsegut Conservation Center, will further amplify promotion through their own networks and communication channels.

Additional outreach will include press releases and event listings submitted to local media outlets such as the Hernando Sun and community event calendars, with potential reach extending throughout Hernando County. In-library promotion, including staff recommendations and direct patron engagement, will further support attendance and participation.

Together, these strategies will ensure consistent, wide-reaching promotion and meaningful engagement with diverse audiences across the community.

Project Evaluation*

**What methods and tools will you use to assess the reach and impact of your project?
How will you use the collected information to inform future programming?**

The Library will use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess both the reach and impact of the project. Attendance will be tracked for all programs, along with basic demographic information when available, to measure participation and audience diversity. The library will also monitor engagement metrics such as program registration, repeat attendance, and circulation of related materials and displays.

Participant feedback will be collected through brief post-program surveys, offered in both print and digital formats, to gather input on program content, relevance, and overall experience. Informal feedback gathered through staff interactions and community partner observations will also be documented to capture additional insights.

The collected data will be analyzed to evaluate which topics, formats, and outreach strategies were most effective. These findings will be used to inform future humanities programming, guide collection development, strengthen community partnerships, and refine marketing approaches to better reach and serve the community.

Project Impact*

Why is this project important to the identified audience(s)? How will it advance or strengthen your organization's mission and work in the public humanities?

This project is important to Hernando County because it creates accessible opportunities for residents to explore Florida's history, culture, and identity through a local lens. Many community members engage with history primarily through national narratives; this project brings those conversations closer to home, helping participants better understand the people, environments, and cultural influences that shape their daily lives. By offering free, public programs, the library removes barriers to participation and invites a broad and diverse audience into meaningful humanities experiences.

The project also responds to a growing need for community connection and shared dialogue. Through scholar-led programs and community-based discussions, participants will be encouraged to reflect, ask questions, and engage with one another around topics that connect past and present. This type of engagement fosters critical thinking, civic awareness, and a deeper sense of place within both Florida and the nation.

This initiative directly advances the mission of the Hernando County Public Library System by expanding access to lifelong learning, promoting cultural understanding, and serving as

a hub for community engagement. It strengthens the library's role in the public humanities by positioning it as a space where history, culture, and ideas are actively explored and shared, and where community voices are an essential part of the conversation.

Budget and Budget Detail Requests may not exceed \$10,000 and Florida Humanities funds may only be used for allowable expenses incurred during the grant period. All project costs must be reasonable and necessary to accomplish project objectives. A minimum 1:1 cost share is required for all Florida Humanities grants.

BUDGET ATTACHED.

Florida Humanities Request Budget

Category	Description	Amount (\$)
Personnel (Honoraria)	Guest speakers / Florida Talks scholars	6000
Program Supplies	Materials for programs and activities	1500
Marketing	Printing (flyers, posters, bookmarks)	1000
Travel	Speaker travel (if applicable)	1000
Other	Miscellaneous program expenses	500
Total Request		10000