

Ideas Checklist: Promoting Your Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant Project

Promoting your project raises awareness of your important work, while generating support and anticipation for the completed project. This is exciting news, and people in your community want to know about it!

Make it a goal to pursue at least one promotional activity each week and accomplish between three and five promotional initiatives throughout the course of the project. For example, a grant recipient might:

1. Issue the enclosed news release to area media.
2. Host a kick-off event.
3. Create a Facebook page about the project. Post weekly updates and photos.
4. Send e-mail updates to local media about the progress of the project.
5. Host a completion event so the community may see the results of your work.
6. Nominate your completed project for an award.

The Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants are made possible by funds from all Minnesota taxpayers through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. It is important to acknowledge this in both the publicity about your project and the actual grant project.

- All publicity releases, informational brochures (for example, walking tours and publications), and public reports relating to an approved grant project should contain an acknowledgment as follows: *This project has been made possible by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the vote of Minnesotans on November 4, 2008. Administered by the Minnesota Historical Society.*
- For restoration and preservation grant projects, grantees should post a sign during project work stating: *This project has been made possible in part by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the vote of Minnesotans on November 4, 2008. Administered by the Minnesota Historical Society.*

These acknowledgements should also feature the Legacy Logo. This logo is available in different formats on the Minnesota State Legislature website at <http://www.legacy.leg.mn/legacy-logo>.

There are many ways you can promote your project to reporters, members of your organization and your community. Below are some ideas for your consideration. Feel free to expand upon these ideas and develop some of your own.

Reach Out to Local Media

Pitch Stories

- Identify local newspapers, TV shows, radio stations, newsletters and bloggers that might be interested in your project. Collect the names, phone/fax numbers, e-mails and addresses of the appropriate contacts at each media outlet.
- Submit the enclosed, customized release via e-mail, mail and/or fax. Give each media outlet a call to tell them about your project. Offer to show them your work. Encourage them to set up an interview with you and consider ongoing feature stories about your project.
- Provide regular updates via e-mail or mail (see Appendix A). Call your contacts periodically with news about your work and to discuss story ideas.

Communicate with Your Organization

Newsletters / Publications

- Be sure to include articles about your project in printed and electronic newsletters as well as publications.
- Consider writing a dedicated letter to your members with the good news about the grant as well as an overview of the project, goals and timeline. Don't forget to tell them how to get ongoing updates about the project (see "Social Media" section below).
- Create a column in subsequent issues for project updates such as milestones, photos, upcoming events and opportunities to volunteer or participate.
- Write a story when the project is complete. Include "before" and "after" photos (if applicable). Be sure to thank volunteers and the community for their support.

Web Site/Blog

- If your organization has a Web site, create a page/tab for your project. If your organization does not have a Web site, consider developing a dedicated site. Contact your local Internet Service Provider for information on setting up a Web site.
- On your site, provide details about the project including an overview, timeline, photos, opportunities to volunteer or participate and information about where to get regular updates.
- Start a project blog and publish weekly or bi-monthly updates.

Tell Your Story Using Social Media

For examples of how one organization has used social media, visit the Minnesota Historical Society at the following social media sites:

- <http://www.facebook.com/minnesotahistoricalsociety>
- <http://twitter.com/mnhs>
- <http://www.flickr.com/photos/minnesotahistoricalsociety>
- <http://www.youtube.com/minnesotahistory>

Facebook

- If you do not already have a Facebook page, create a fan page for your organization/project. Visit www.facebook.com and follow the prompts to set up your dedicated page. Invite friends and community members to join by posting your Facebook address on your Web site, including it in newsletters and mentioning it during interviews. Be sure to join the Minnesota Historical Society's Facebook page (URL above).
- Post details about the project. Include photos, information about the importance of your work and encourage others to comment.
- Post regular (at least once a week) updates about the project's progress, milestones, event notices, opportunities to volunteer or participate, announcements of upcoming interviews as well as links to news stories about your project.
- Engage the community by posting questions about your organization or project. Be sure to respond to questions to encourage site activity. As an example, "Does anyone know the best source for reclaimed wood to restore an 1898 historic barn?"

Twitter

- If you do not already have an account, set up a Twitter profile for your organization/project. Visit www.Twitter.com and follow the prompts.
- Invite friends and community members to join you on Twitter as described in the Facebook section above. Follow the Minnesota Historical Society and its staff at <http://twitter.com/mnhs>.
- At least once a week, "tweet" 140-character updates about the project. "Tweets" might include milestones, event notices, announcements of upcoming interviews and links to news stories about your project. As an example, "Today, we completed the roof on our historic barn. It looks just like the photo from 1898! What do you think? <add TinyURL>" (See information include below about creating TinyURLs.)

- You can include Internet links in your Twitter “tweets” using TinyURLs. Since “tweets” are limited to 140 characters, there are several Web sites that allow you to shorten a URL to just a few characters: tinyURL.com (<http://tinyURL.com>), Bit.Ly (<http://Bit.Ly>) and is.gd (<http://is.gd>).
- Twitter allows users to follow others with similar interests. You can search under keywords such as “history,” “preservation,” “restoration projects,” etc. Search people using key words related to your project. Begin to follow these “tweeters” to develop your own community on Twitter.
- To help you navigate the world of Twitter, check out “The Twitter Book” (O’Reilly Media, Inc., June 2009) by Tim O’Reilly and Sarah Milstein at your library or book store. It’s an easy-to-use guide to the basics and more advanced features of Twitter.

Flickr

- Flickr is a Web site that allows you to upload, share and manage photos and videos on the Internet at www.Flickr.com. If you do not already have a Flickr account, consider creating an account where you can post your photos. Invite people to your account to see photos of the project as described above in the Facebook section.
- Create a “before” album of the project. Track the project’s progress with monthly/bi-monthly photo updates. Be sure to post final photos of your project in an “after” album.
- “Tweet” links to new Flickr posts using the TinyURL described in the Twitter section above.

YouTube

- YouTube is a Web site for budding filmmakers and amateurs alike that allows users to post and view short videos. If you do not already have an account, consider creating a YouTube account at www.YouTube.com. Visit the site and follow the prompts. The site also provides instructions for posting videos.
- Take video to track the progress of your project. You can use a device as small as your cell phone or the best digital video camera you can find. Post regular updates and e-mail the links to media, friends and project fans.
- “Tweet” links to YouTube videos using the TinyURL described in the Twitter section above.

Host Regular Events

Kick-off Event

- Host a commencement event at the site where you will be undertaking the majority of the work. Make it as simple or involved as you would like with event elements that might include refreshments, programs, lectures, historic re-enactors and more. Be sure to provide a tour and give a small presentation about the nature of the project. Invite members of your organization, the community,

state elected officials and legislators as well as local media to attend. Offer the media photo opportunities and interviews.

Sneak Peek Open House

- Determine the best times to invite the community back to see the progress of the project. Consider hosting a Sneak Peek Open House at a time when the project is reaching a key milestone. Be sure to invite media and suggest a project update story.

Celebrate the Completion

- Don't forget to celebrate the completion of your project! Host an event with members of your organization, the community, state elected officials, legislators and the media to preview/tour the completed project. Offer up interviews to the media.
- If the nature of your project allows, consider a ribbon-cutting ceremony where dignitaries cut a ribbon to signify the project is now open and complete.
- Further engage the members of your organization and community by hosting a "Thank You" reception for project donors, chairs, supporters and volunteers.

Nominate Your Project for an Award

- Recognition for a job well done can elicit further attention by the media and funders. Documentation generated by your work on the grant often can easily be repurposed to meet the requirements of an award program.
 - Minnesota History Award through the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums (MALHM) at www.minnesotahistorymuseums.org
 - Minnesota Preservation Awards through the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota (PAM) at www.mnpreservation.org
 - Leadership in History Award through American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) at www.aaslh.org

Say "Thank You"

- Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants are made possible by funds from all Minnesota taxpayers through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. Be sure to thank your community members for their support, as well as state elected officials who help provide funding for history programs and projects, such as these grants. For more specific language to use in publicity, letters, publications, and other grant materials, please refer to page 1 of this document.

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Appendix A: Sample E-mail Update for Media Outlets

Dear <Insert Name>,

The Minnesota Historical Society recently awarded the <insert organization> a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant of <insert amount> to support its <insert project name>.

The <insert project name> is a project of enduring value because it will <insert project goal>. Attached to this message is a news release with more information about the project and the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants program.

I'm writing to suggest a story idea about this project. Please let me know if you are interested in setting up an interview with <insert name> of the <insert organization> to discuss this exciting and important local project and the work that will unfold in the coming months.

I will call you soon. Thanks in advance for considering the <insert project name>. I look forward to working with you!

Best regards,

<Insert Name>

<Insert Organization>

<Insert Phone Number>

<Insert E-mail Address>