CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES
University of Wisconsin - Madison

Public Humanities Exchange (HEX)
Program Handbook
2026-2027

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HEX Mission Statement & Program Information

HEX Mission & Values

The Public Humanities Exchange (HEX) program is a long-running and dynamic program that funds innovative public humanities projects that forge partnerships between community organizations and students. The program provides training in community partnership and mentoring during project design and implementation.

HEX was created as a part of the Center for the Humanities in 2004. The program supports creative, participatory relationships between a dynamic range of community groups, nonprofit organizations, and humanities students and scholars. As a vibrant community engagement program, HEX is on the forefront of implementing programs that are now at the center of nationwide discussions about the humanities as a new model of social engagement. The HEX program provides financial support in the form of one to two semester grants to undergraduate and graduate scholars. We also provide resources and institutional support in the form of workshops, information, networks, and expertise to students and our community partners. HEX scholars represent a cross-section of disciplines and methodologies, and they use their research to engage diverse members of the public in related kinds of creative exploration and critical discussion.

Our participating academic departments are ever-expanding and include, but are not limited to, humanities departments and affiliated programs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Our partners include area libraries, community centers, well-established nonprofits, emerging nonprofits, hospitals, museums, schools, and also many underrepresented corners of our community. Our projects can produce humanities-based artifacts such as oral histories, anthologies, websites, artwork, and dramatic performances. Along the way, these projects provoke a deeper engagement between participants that leave both with better resources, training, networks, curriculum, and materials.

By supporting and promoting student engagement with community partners, the HEX program seeks to highlight the long-standing tradition of collaborations across educational, political, social, and environmental lines, as well as increase access to humanities resources and skills for all.

Program Information

The Assistant Director, Public Humanities, Danielle Weindling, weindling@wisc.edu, will assist in the professional polishing of student project proposal and provide mentorship throughout the planning and implementation process so that students may best draw upon humanities scholarship and methods. This includes working with HEX scholars to develop local partnerships, advising them on how to successfully translate their humanities education to the public sphere, and providing training in all aspects of non-profit partnership, including budgeting and scheduling, team management, communication, assessment, and evaluation.

This handbook is part checklist, part information to help you manage your project responsibilities. It is by no means exhaustive. However, the general guidelines, requirements and required forms are available within this single document. We encourage you to read this document thoroughly and develop questions for the Assistant Director ahead of your application process and/or onboarding meeting.

Directory

HEX Scholars

Consult the Assistant Director of Public Humanities and the HEX website page to identify previous HEX scholars with interests similar to your own and who may be willing to advise you.

Center for the Humanities Staff

Danielle Weindling, Assistant Director, Public Humanities, weindling@wisc.edu, (608) 263-4783

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Mandatory and Optional Meetings and Events

Project Meetings

Meeting #1, upon acceptance	HEX welcome and best practices with the Assistant Director, Public Humanities
Meeting #2, pre-implementation:	Implementation check-in with Assistant Director *and/or* informal project presentation with Center for the Humanities staff and/or community partners
Meeting #3-5, mid-implementation:	Meeting(s) (or site-visit) with Public Humanities Assistant Director • These meetings take place once every 3-5 weeks depending on length of project (1 or 2 semesters) • We recommend scheduling these check-ins at regular intervals (i.e. 1st Tuesday every month at 2pm; you can work with the Assistant Director to determine this schedule.)
Meeting #6, mid-evaluation:	Final Reflection

Center Events

Mid-Semester:	At least one Public Works Workshop (see web site for upcoming offerings). You may attend this before, during, or after your project.
Mid-Semester:	As a part of the publicity plan for your project, we highly encourage you to give a campus presentation on your project after implementation and evaluation is over. We recommend presenting (1) in your department, (2) at a relevant course, (3) with the Association of Graduate Engaged Scholars (AGES) Bagels and Research, a monthly event where community engaged graduate scholars present their projects, or (4) at the Wisconsin Idea Conference (open to both undergraduate and graduate students). Another easy and rewarding way to fulfill this requirement would also be (5) to partner with us and present your project at a relevant class along with the Assistant Director of Public Humanities to advertise the HEX program to future participants.

Meeting Requirements

By Meeting #1:

- Submit a high-resolution headshot of yourself (jpeg format), your project title and community partner(s), and a 150-word description of your project/personal bio. See previous project summaries on the web site for examples.
    - Project/Biographical Statement: Include your base information, name, program, professional/career goals and/or experience; Include brief description of project and project

goals, include partner information/embed links if you have them. For group projects, include brief individual bios and a single project description.

For Meeting #2:

- A 20-30 minute discussion about your project.

- Questions to address in this meeting:
    - What are the activities and expected outcomes of your project?
    - Who are the constituents of this project and how will the essence of your project be sustained beyond the lifespan of your personal involvement?
    - Who will be involved from the community partner and what resources are they providing?
    - What are the best practices for your type of community engagement project?
    - What are similar projects, here in Dane County? Nationally? Internationally?
    - What is your publicity plan?
    - What is your evaluation plan?

For Meeting #3-5:

- In addition to using these meetings as an opportunity to build rapport, we also cover substantive topics such as:
    - Reporting on progress with project milestones/tasks
    - Sharing successes
    - Sharing changes to timeline or plans
    - Ensuring community partner relations are proceeding satisfactorily; troubleshooting and advising about next steps, as needed
    - Learning how to build and maintain a budget
    - Preparing for approval of budget & logistics of fund disbursement
    - Planning for documentation of project and/or a project tangible
    - Providing feedback on performance / meeting HEX expectations / your experience in the program

- If applicable, schedule a site visit with the Assistant Director of Public Humanities as early as possible.

For Meeting #6:

- Schedule and meet with the Assistant Director, Public Humanities, and your community partner(s).
- Complete the self-reflection form and have your community partner(s) complete their respective self-reflection form.

Center for the Humanities Events

We encourage you to attend the Center's other lectures and events. The Assistant Director, Public Humanities will reach out to you when we believe a particular event strongly applies to your project and/or learning as a HEX scholar. For a full listing of events, see the website.

HEX projects are generally broken into three phases: Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. Projects run for either one or two academic semesters. You will have already completed some or perhaps most of the planning phase at this point. This general timeline will give you a broad sense of your responsibilities to the project, your community partners and participants, and the Center for the Humanities.

Develpment Phase

1. **MEETING #1:** Schedule this "HEX Welcome and Best Practices" meeting with the Assistant Director, Public Humanities (see previous section for instructions).
2. Develop Project Plan: Collaborate with community partner on identifying project deliverables, activities, outcomes, timeline, publicity, and evaluation strategy. Organize this information using the project plan template with your community partner. Each community partner must have its own project plan. You will a template for the project plan below.
3. **MEETING #2:** Project Check-in (see previous section for instructions).
4. Finalize Project Plan: Agree upon the project plan and associated plans for project logistics, marketing, volunteer recruitment, publicity, capstone, and evaluation.
5. Submit your project plan and HEX Disbursement Form to the Assistant Director, Public Humanities, and set up a date for a site visit, if applicable.

Implementation Phase

6. Meet with Assistant Director, Public Humanities, as needed. They will check in with you approximately once a month if they haven't heard from you. Consider the questions listed on "Questions for Self-Reflection" sheet, located near the end of this handbook.
7. **MEETING #3-5:** Implementation Check-ins & optional site visit (see previous section for instructions)
8. Execute project plan, including plans for finalizing the project's capstone. Contact the Assistant Director once the shape and any associated date(s) of the capstone are agreed upon with the community partner, if applicable, arrange Assistant Director to attend any associated events for project capstone.
9. Execute publicity plans, including how the story of your project will be shared on campus and in the community.

Evaluation Phase

10. Execute evaluation plan with your participants.
11. **MEETING #6:** Final reflection meeting with Assistant Director and community partner(s) (see previous section for instructions).

Meetings #3-5: Questions for Self-Reflection

Please consider these questions in advance of your scheduled meetings with staff

- Has your plan or project changed significantly since the last time we spoke? If so, how?
- What is the breakdown for your use of time on this project?
- What challenges have you faced within the past few weeks?
- What elements of your project have been particularly successful or enjoyable?
- If you were a community partner in your project, what would you find successful or enjoyable? What would you find challenging? How could you help to address their concerns?
- If you were a participant in your project, what would you be enjoying and what would you find challenging? How could you help to address their concerns?
- Is your agreed upon schedule and project plan working for both you and your partner? What perhaps needs to change?

Budget and Funding

The project plan includes a section for you and your community partner to describe the project's budget. Whether you are receiving a one or two semester grant, it is ultimately up to you on how much of your funds to spend on project resources, and how much is appropriate to keep as a stipend for your time and efforts. The Assistant Director, Public Humanities, will guide you on this issue. After you submit the project plan and Disbursement Form, you will receive the funds in one lump sum in the bursar account, and the management of the funds will then be in your hands. In some cases, it is wise to be completely transparent with your community partner about the amount of your grant, and in other cases, you may find it prudent to only disclose the part of the budget pertinent to the activities of the project. Again, the Assistant Director can and will help guide you through this issue.

Project funds disbursement and management

- Project Funds disbursement
    - Funds will be disbursed to you when and only when:
        - You sign and submit your scholars' expectations form
        - Your projected budget has final approval from the Assistant Director
        - Your disbursement assessment has been submitted
        - You have finalized a project plan with your community partner
    - Funds will be disbursed via the Bursars office directly to your student account and processed the same way financial aid/tuition credits are processed.

University procedures and regulations require that we distribute money to most students through particular routes, typically through a **disbursed "scholarship" to their bursar accounts**, after which the excess is "refunded" to you, the student.

Disbursements through the Bursars office can have a potential impact on your **taxes** (due to the money being received as a "scholarship") or your **financial aid award** (the marking of this money as "scholarship" through their bursar account triggers the Financial Aid Office to reconfigure financial aid awards in some cases, and this could negatively impact a student's ability to pay their college expenses). Consult a tax consultant (privately, or through public assistance if qualified) and/or financial aid consultant (30-minute appointments available by calling the UW-Madison Financial Aid Office) prior to moving forward if you would like more information about individual tax or financial aid situations. Students with unique circumstances or concerns about the impact on their personal taxes or financial aid are encouraged to discuss these with the Assistant Director and the Financial Aid Office.

In some cases, the timing of the distribution of money to your bursar account can be of concern. If you have a balance owed (e.g., for tuition that has yet to be paid), the bursar will apply the funds we distribute to your account to the balance owed and thus you could lose access to your project funds. Please ensure that you check on the particulars of your bursar account setup prior to disbursing funds. More information about the refund process can be found here: https://bursar.wisc.edu/

- You/your team will manage the project funds
    - Remember to separate project funds from your personal fund.
    - Track your project funds using a word or excel document.
    - You may be asked to submit an accounting of funds, so keep detailed records and receipts.

Final Project

The final project deliverable is a representation of the culmination of your project. For many, this deliverable will be built into the fabric of the project itself. *If not*, you may consider the following possibilities:

- Publishing an anthology of student or community writing.
- Publishing an article in a local newspaper, blog, or community forum.
- Hosting an episode of a local podcast.
- Hosting a reading or talk on or off-campus.
- Having an event, workshop, or party for community at partner organization.
- Creating a video or other publicity materials for your partner organization.

The activities of your final deliverable project may require additional funds. Consider applying to:

- The Dane Country Youth Commission
- Madison Arts Commission
- The Wisconsin Arts Board
- The Wisconsin Humanities Council
- The Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission
- Evjue Foundation
- UW-Madison Lectures Committee
- Kemper K. Knapp Bequest
- Your department
- Local businesses

HEX Scholar Expectations Form

Working in the community makes you a representative of the university and of your discipline.

We expect HEX scholars to feel comfortable defining and explaining their role as the lead of a HEX project, as a public scholar, and as an advocate for the humanities beyond the boundaries of the university. We expect that you familiarize yourself with the mission of HEX, as well as that of the Center for the Humanities, and be able to explain the HEX program to community partners, participants, and volunteers.

A few common points of courtesy:

- Have a positive, open attitude.
- Arrive ten minutes early.
- Send follow-up emails and thank you notes.
- Respond to e-mails within 48 hours.
- Bring extra materials to sessions.
- Leave both phone and email messages if you need to cancel or reschedule a meeting.
- Follow through on what you say you will do and communicate in advance about any changes to your project plan, budget, and implementation process with your community partner & the Assistant Director.

Agreement
By returning this page to the Assistant Director, you are indicating that you are aware of, understand, and will follow the expectations of the HEX Program.

Printed name: _____

Signature:_____ Date: _____

HEX Scholar Skills & Talking Points

As a HEX scholar, you will be working consciously to improve your skills as a public scholar and partner of the community, including:

Research Skills

- Understanding the principles and methods of participatory action research
- Appreciation of where knowledge is located, for example, in document archives, organizational records, census data, published scholarship, web resources, personal and group memory, museums, and within and among K-12 students, teachers, and members of the community

Intercultural Skills

- Ability to reflect openly on and work across social and cultural differences, including those of race, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexual orientation, language, region, and gender

Theoretical Skills

- Ability to read and understand theoretical and philosophical reflections relevant to your project
- Capacity to think and talk about concepts and ideas, and why they matter
- Ability to revise theoretical frameworks on the basis of experience

Political Skills

- Ability to define the public good, the public domain, “the commons” in the context of your project
- Ability to reflect on and raise questions about what democracy, citizenship, ‘publicness,’ and agency mean in and for one’s work
- Ability to claim legitimacy for the project and public agency for oneself
- Capacity to change minds, other people’s and one’s own, and to disagree
- Ability to build alliances among people and groups with diverse interests

Skills Relating to Groups and Community Partners

- Capacity to form purposeful relationships and networks; to sustain them through inclusive and democratic planning; to negotiate differences with transparency in meetings, over the phone, and by email; to reflect together on the importance of your project; and to assess its successes and failures
- Understanding of the organizational character of your community partner, such as public schools, public cultural institutions, nonprofits, community centers, etc
- Ability to write accessible prose in multiple genres for various audiences, including personal reflection, proposals, fact sheets, accurate summaries, life stories, and pedagogical materials

Technical Skills

- Public speaking
- Publication design and production
- Event organization and promotion
- Needs assessment
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Ability to talk to people about money and resources
- Website design and creation
- Meeting facilitation
- Time management

Some talking points about your project and the HEX program may include how:

- Your project develops connections between UW-Madison and the greater Madison community
- The project places your academic research and scholarly interests in a public context
- The project raises the academic interest or achievement level of low-income students, and/or the project serves an underserved community
- The project encourages increased public appreciation of the value of research in the humanities
- The project's agenda and objectives are the result of collaboration and consultation between you and your community partner

Memorandum of Understanding

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The purpose of this memorandum is to ensure clear expectations between both the Public Humanities Exchange (HEX) scholar and community partner. A separate form should be filled out for each partner organization. Once the form is filled out, both parties should indicate they are in agreement with the terms and expectations.

HEX Scholar(s): _____

Project Title: _____

Community Partner: _____

Community Partner Lead Contact: _____

Community Partner Lead Contact Email: _____

Project Planning & Implementation Timeline:

Project Goals (narrative)**:**

- Community Partner(s) (include outcomes and impacts):
- Scholar (include professional skills you hope to develop):

Deliverables:

Budget:

Marketing/Publicity Strategy:

- How will you share your project with interested parties in the community, scholars in your field, and across the UW? *Consider documenting your project via a blog, photo essay, video clip, website, etc., and share that documentation with the Assistant Director.*
- How will the Center for the Humanities be recognized as a sponsor and partner?

Participants:

- Who are the participants of this project and what is their stake in the matter?

- Will you be working with a pre-existing group of individuals? If not, how will you plan to recruit, establish a core group of members, and maintain attendance? This is an adjacent issue to your marketing strategy. *If you plan to work in an MMSD school, please be aware of any additional approvals or forms. Please consult with the Assistant Director, Public Humanities.*

- If working with underage children, with at-risk communities, or with personal information, how is the project addressing parental approval, privacy, and safety concerns?

Resources:

- Describe existing institutional support available to you through your community partner and others, including space, materials, personnel, equipment, and technical support. How will you acquire additional needed resources?
    - Are there projects or leaders within your partnering organization that can assist you with advice and instruction?
    - Are there particularly successful programs there that you can visit and observe as a part of your planning process?
    - Will your project occur during the regular program hours of your partner? If not, how will you account for logistical challenges that may arise?
    - What are other logistical challenges that you can anticipate for implementation of your project?

Evaluation Strategy (e.g., survey of participants, interviews)**:**

Grant Disbursement Schedule and Form

Please submit this form along with your project plan. The funds will displace any amount owed in your bursar account. HEX scholars should wait until their bursar account is clear before requesting disbursement.

The funds will be disbursed through a deposit to your university bursar account as a "scholarship." Taxes are not taken out by UW-Madison, so you may owe taxes on this at the end of the year. See a tax consultant about your situation.

Name: _____

Student ID #: _____

UW-Madison Employee ID# (if applicable): _____

(Can be found at the top of your paystub, available in MyUW.)

Are you a U.S. citizen? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Are you currently an employee of UW-Madison? ❑ Yes ❑ No

If yes, what is the expected end date for your current position(s): _____

_____

Do you have a balance remaining (money still owed) on your bursar account? ❑ Yes ❑ No

If yes, do you need us to wait until a particular date has passed before disbursing funds to your bursar account? _____

End of Project Self-Reflection

Congratulations on the near completion of your HEX Project. Take a moment to reflect on the highs and lows of your experience, and the lessons learned from this project. This information is helpful for the HEX Program, its future participants, and your learning experience. Once you have completed this form, please return it to the Assistant Director and schedule your closing meeting.

1. How were your project goals met as outlined on your project plan? What changes occurred during the implementation phase?
2. What benefits, opportunities, or experiences were you able to bring to your community partner, and in turn what did they provide for you? Was your relationship as equally partnered as you had hoped?
3. What, if anything, feels unfinished or in need of further attention? This does not necessarily have to be directly related to your project, as you may have stumbled upon a new unmet or under-met need in the community while conducting your project (just as one example).
4. Please re-write your project summary from the HEX web site to reflect the final activities and impacts of your project on your community partner (300 words or less). Retain/include information about yourself, your degree, and department(s).
5. What advice would you give to future HEX scholars?
6. Would you recommend that future HEX scholars work with this community partner?
7. What does it mean to be engaged in the public humanities?
8. How do you see yourself continuing to work within the public humanities?
9. Please provide any comments or critiques about HEX and the Center for the Humanities:
    a. Did you receive appropriate support from Center staff?
    b. Was the stipend adequate given the scope of your project?
    c. What would you change, if anything, about the structure of the program?

Name:

Date:

End of Project Partner Organization Reflection

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Congratulations on the completion or near completion of your collaboration with a Humanities Exchange (HEX) scholar. Please take a moment to reflect on the highs and lows of your experience, the impacts of the project, and the lessons learned from this project. This information is helpful for the HEX Program, our students, and future partner organizations. We may use a portion of your response in marketing and publicity for our programs. Once you have completed this form, please return it to the Assistant Director, Public Humanities, Danielle Weindling, weindling@wsic.edu. Thank you for your trust in our HEX scholar and your work in collaborating in this project!

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1. What were the initial goals of the project? What changes occurred during the implementation of this project?

2. What were the final activities and benefits that the HEX scholar was able to bring to your organization? Was your relationship with the scholar as you had hoped?

3. Was there anything Center for the Humanities staff could have done to better prepare the HEX scholar to collaborate with your organization?

4. What will be the lasting impact of your HEX scholar's project on your organization's staff, programs, constituents, and future?

5. What, if anything, feels unfinished or in need of further attention? How will your organization work to continue what the HEX scholar has started?

6. What future HEX scholar projects (if any) could you envision for the future?

Name/Title:

Organization:

Email:

Date:

Your project is finished! Now what?

- Letters of recommendation
  - Discuss what this process entails with Assistant Director during your exit interview.
  - A good practice would be to write a draft statement with bullet points. Submit this to the Assistant Director and ask for it to be saved with your materials. You should also hold onto a copy for your own record keeping.

- Add your project/work to your resume, work history, CV for your personal files.

- Get help with using your project as a springboard for career success.
  - For Undergraduates: Contact College of L&S Successworks, where advisors will be able to assist in helping you re-frame your HEX project in the context of your future job search and the narrative you're telling about your professional experiences.

- You may be contacted for a "Year in Review" process, where we ask for you to comment on your project, it's highlights and successes, as well as your experience as a scholar. We appreciate the additional feedback. This process helps keep HEX-U funded for future students.

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