



Minnesota History Awards

**GUIDELINES & INSTRUCTIONS
2026-2027**



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HISTORY AWARDS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Since 2009, the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums (MALHM) has recognized exceptional history work carried out by local history organizations in the state at its Annual Conference. The program features a formal nomination process and review by a panel of local history peers to determine which nominations will receive an award. Over the years, award categories have been modified, added, or removed. At this time, there are two distinct history award programs: the Minnesota History Awards and the Lifetime Achievement Awards.

The Minnesota History Awards are modeled after the original program, which began in 2009. Nominees are project-based and fit into one of five categories: Behind-the-Scenes, Civic Engagement & Public Celebrations, Collections, Interpretive Programs, and Publications.

The Lifetime Achievement Awards began in 2016. This program is meant to honor local history professionals and volunteers who have made outstanding contributions and demonstrated leadership to Minnesota's history community on a regional, statewide, or national level, with a service requirement of 25 years or more.

HISTORY AWARDS COMMITTEE

The History Awards Committee consists of individuals with representation from throughout Minnesota. The MALHM Board of Directors assists in appointing individuals, made during their annual in-person meeting in the fall. The Local History Services Manager of the Minnesota Historical Society additionally serves as one of the committee members, or may appoint a designee of their choice to serve annually. The final representative on the committee is the Alliance Coordinator. Every two years, the committee will nominate and elect a chair from one of the board appointed representatives.

NOMINATION PROCESS

History Award nominations are accepted beginning September 30, 2026 until 11:59 pm on January 13, 2027. To be eligible for the awards, the project must have come to a completion between July 1, 2025 and October 1, 2026. For a Lifetime Achievement Award, the individual must have met the 25 year requirement between July 1, 2025 and October 1, 2026.

Nominations may come through self-nomination or an outside party. Nomination forms are available in a fillable PDF format via the MALHM website. A nomination is considered complete if the Alliance Coordinator electronically receives the nomination form, required documents, and supporting documents as outlined in the guidelines by the nomination deadline. **No late submissions will be accepted.**

NOMINATION TIMELINE

Open September 30, 2026
Due January 13, 2027

PROJECT COMPLETION

Between July 1, 2025 and
October 1, 2026

COMPLETE NOMINATION

- ☐ Nomination form
- ☐ Required documents
- ☐ Supporting documents

EVALUATION PROCESS

Each nomination will be reviewed for completeness. Any nomination missing the required materials is considered incomplete and will be removed from consideration. The Awards Committee will receive nominations that meet the program requirements and are determined to be complete for review. Any committee member must recuse themselves from reviewing nominations that either 1) are submitted by them or their organization or that they directly worked on; 2) include a letter of critical testimony from them; or 3) are directly related to an individual being nominated for a Lifetime Achievement Award.



Nominees will receive an award if they score 80% or higher on a simple majority of review from eligible committee members.

Minnesota History Award nominations are evaluated based on the Nomination Statement section (40% of score), Impact Statement section (40% of score), and the reviewers' determination of the project as an exceptional example and model for local history organizations to follow (20% of score).

Lifetime Achievement Award nominations are evaluated based on the answers in the Nomination Statement section: impact on local organization (30% of score), impact on region, statewide, or national level (50% of score), and accomplishments/awards (20% of score).

HOW TO SUBMIT NOMINATIONS

All nominations must be submitted by email to the Alliance Coordinator at liz@mnhistoryalliance.org. Nominations may also be shared via Google Drive or Dropbox to the same email address, but should be made shareable for committee members.

ALLIANCE COORDINATOR
liz@mnhistoryalliance.org

QUESTIONS?

Contact the Alliance Coordinator Liz Koele by phone (612) 500-7460 or by email liz@mnhistoryalliance.org.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

All nominations must be received by 11:59 pm on January 13, 2027.

AWARD NOTIFICATION

The nominee will be notified of the award status by email on or by February 19, 2027. Award winners will be invited to the History Awards Program at the 2027 MALHM Annual Meeting & Conference on Thursday, April 15th.

Each award winner will be sent a press release that can be used in your local area to promote this achievement.

MINNESOTA HISTORY AWARDS

NOMINEE(S) INFORMATION

These questions provide basic background information on the nominee(s). The official contact will be the only person that MALHM will discuss questions regarding nominations and contact once a decision is reached, so make sure the information you provide is accurate.

To be an eligible nominee, the organization or individual must have held a key role or was a key partner in the project being nominated. If awarded, MALHM will provide one plaque per project at the award ceremony, with the opportunity to request more.

EXAMPLE



*In the **Publications category**, the nominees may include the **author** or **editor**, and the **local history organization** sponsoring its publication. The publishing company or graphic designer are not eligible nominees, as they were vendors on the project.*

*In the **Interpretive Programs category**, the nominee is a partnering consortium of six organizations, named the **Lakes Region History Assembly**, which developed a traveling exhibit. The nominee would be the Lakes Region History Assembly, **not each individual partner organization**.*

PROJECT NOMINATION

These questions help the committee identify your nominated project and place it in the appropriate review category.

The project name will be used in public recognition efforts, as well as on the award plaque. For example, if nominating an Interpretive Program, use the program series title or exhibit title as the project name.

For the project team, please list all individuals or vendors that were integral to the completion of the project. Only those listed as a nominee will be eligible to receive a plaque if the project is awarded, but the committee will recognize the entire project team at the awards ceremony.

Select the most appropriate category for your nomination. Detailed information on each category is provided in the pages that follow, including a category definition, project examples, and specific required documents for that category.



Limit yourself to one (1) nomination per organization per category.

BEHIND-THE-SCENES

Too often, the work that goes on behind the scenes is not given its proper due, even though it might help meet your mission. A successful fundraising campaign, new set of policies, implementing recommendations from a recognized assessment program or professional review, or some other project that the public would not be aware of that allows an organization to move forward in a manner that should be recognized as an example to the rest of the state's organizations.



PROJECT EXAMPLES

Capital campaign to build a museum addition

Successful implementation of a new business membership program

Achieving gold certificates in all levels of the StEPs program

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

☐ **Project photographs**

Photos will be used in announcements, both in print and online, if the nominee receives this award. The photo(s) must be provided as a high resolution .jpeg file.

☐ **Planning documents** (must include if available)

☐ **Materials created to implement the project** (must include if available)

☐ **Media coverage of project** (must include if available)

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS

Organizations and communities come together to mark important milestones, anniversaries, and address contemporary historical issues that affect the local, regional, state, or national level. These celebrations highlight the history of events or organizations and allow a community to come together to celebrate, heal, or address difficult histories through community engagement and civil dialogue.



PROJECT EXAMPLES

Community or organizational milestone celebration such as a centennial event

Anniversary of community defining event, such as a natural disaster or labor dispute

Story collection and public forum initiative to address racial housing covenants

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

☐ **Two (2) letters of critical testimony***

These letters should come from museum or public history professionals, but not the person submitting the nomination. No more than one letter can come from a community leader outside the history field. Each letter should address the nominee's demonstration of exceptional leadership and the impact on the community or constituency(ies) served.

☐ **Project photographs**

Photos will be used in announcements, both in print and online, if the nominee receives this award. The photo(s) must be provided as a high resolution .jpeg file.

☐ **Planning documents** (must include if available)

☐ **Marketing materials** (must include if available)

☐ **Media coverage of project** (must include if available)

***See next page**



***NOTE:** Any interpretive program or publication produced as part of a civic engagement or public celebration project must be submitted in accordance with those category guidelines. A total of two letters of critical testimony will be needed for the overall nomination. One on the interpretive program or publication and the other on the civic engagement or public celebration project.

COLLECTIONS

A local history organization's collection is the treasure trove that allows it to meet its mission. Preserving and protecting it takes a considerable amount of effort. Collections staff are usually very excited to share their accomplishments with others. This category is meant to highlight those efforts.



PROJECT EXAMPLES

Conservation of a special artifact or collection
Improved storage facilities
Rehousing project
Digital preservation project
Improved access to collections

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

☐ **Project photographs**

Photos will be used in announcements, both in print and online, if the nominee receives this award. The photo(s) must be provided as a high resolution .jpeg file.

☐ **Planning documents** (must include if available)

☐ **Samples of the completed work**

☐ **Media coverage of project** (must include if available)

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

Utilizing their collections, local history organizations begin to explore their stories' themes, events, and people through interpretive programs. These programs are meant to inspire others to learn more, provoke discussion of the material presented, and bring to light the history of a local area, region, or the state of Minnesota.



PROJECT EXAMPLES

Exhibition
Educational program
Film or documentary
Historical marker program
Other interpretive program used to educate the public

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS*

☐ **Two (2) letters of critical testimony**

These letters should come from museum or public history professionals, but not the person submitting the nomination. No more than one letter can come from a community leader outside the history field. Each letter should address the nominee's demonstration of exceptional leadership and the impact on the community or constituency(ies) served.

Letter writers must be free of conflicts of interest due to relationships with the nominator or nominee(s). See Page 10 for more information.

☐ **Project photographs- for exhibits, include photos of the exhibit in its space**

Photos will be used in announcements, both in print and online, if the nominee receives this award. The photo(s) must be provided as a high resolution .jpeg file.

☐ **Media coverage of project** (must include if available)

***CONTINUE BY SELECTING SPECIFIC PROGRAM AREA CHECKLIST ON NEXT PAGE**

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS (CONT.)

EXHIBIT

- ☐ **Panel text**
- ☐ **Planning documents**
- ☐ **List of research material used**
- ☐ **Completed exhibit panels**
High resolution and readable sampling
- ☐ **Interactive or kiosk videos and scripts**
Electronic submissions (video files or links) are required for efficient distribution to the review committee. In the case of a film or documentary that does not have a digital format, a copy will need to be sent by U.S. mail to each committee member within seven days of the application deadline. Addresses will be provided after submission. Copies will not be returned.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

- ☐ **Scripts**
- ☐ **PowerPoint presentation**
- ☐ **Planning documents**
- ☐ **List of research material used**
- ☐ **Training materials for staff/volunteers**

FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES

- ☐ **Viewable copy of film/documentary**
Electronic submissions (video files or links) are required for efficient distribution to the review committee. In the case of a film or documentary that does not have a digital format, a copy will need to be sent by U.S. mail to each committee member within seven days of the application deadline. Addresses will be provided after submission. Copies will not be returned.
- ☐ **Scripts**
- ☐ **Planning documents**
- ☐ **List of research materials used**

OTHER INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM

- ☐ **Planning documents**
- ☐ **Interpretive text**
- ☐ **Sampling of the product**
High resolution and readable
- ☐ **List of research materials used**

PUBLICATIONS

Publications have been used by local history organizations to record the history of a community, event, or people. They can also be used to communicate information related to the work of a local history organization.



PROJECT EXAMPLES

Book, magazine, newsletter

Website

Other printed material for public consumption

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- ☐ **Two (2) letters of critical testimony**
These letters should come from museum or public history professionals, but not the person submitting the nomination. No more than one letter can come from a community leader outside the history field. Each letter should address the nominee's demonstration of exceptional leadership and the impact on the community or constituency(ies) served.
- ☐ **Project photographs**
Photos will be used in announcements, both in print and online, if the nominee receives this award. The photo(s) must be provided as a high resolution .jpeg file.
- ☐ **Copy of publication**
Electronic submissions (PDF or links) are required for efficient distribution to the review committee. In the case of a publication not having an electronic format, copies will need to be mailed to each committee member within seven days of the application deadline. Addresses will be provided after submission. Copies will not be returned.
- ☐ **Planning documents**
- ☐ **List of research material used**
- ☐ **Media coverage of project** (must include if available)

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

This section allows the committee to get to know the organization(s) being nominated for an award. Please provide as much information as you are able within the space allowed.

Tell us about the organization(s) that were part of this project.

To answer this question, the nominator should include information related to the organization's location, history of the organization, organizational makeup (ex. paid staff, all volunteer, consortium of 16 partners, etc.), and any information that you'd like the committee to know related to the organization.



For publications, use this space to also provide background on the author or editor of the project.

What is your mission statement?

Provide the mission statement of the organization(s) involved in the project.

NOMINATION STATEMENT

In this section, the nominator will provide the committee with background information directly related to the project.

Tell us about your project.

When did the project begin (either as an idea or in actual work) and when was it completed?

What were your project goals and how did you plan to achieve them?

Explain the goals of this project, your planning process and how they were achieved, what may have been modified during the work, and any relevant information that caused you to undertake this project.

Is this good history?

Nominations should answer this question. Good History (as defined by the American Association of State & Local History) means the project:

1. Embraces difficult topics by reflecting current scholarship grounding this work in primary source research, and providing a genuine contribution to the understanding of history.
2. Acts to build diversity and inclusiveness through interpretation that considers race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and geography, and is provocative through presenting contested history and multiple perspectives.
3. Cultivates an experimental and creative spirit as a source for imaginative problem solving, exploring new approaches, and resourcefulness, while also looking to others for inspiration. Projects that extend the mission of an organization, demonstrate risk-taking and offer activities outside conventional boundaries will merit the greatest consideration.
4. Demonstrates the relevance of history and showcases how the public can make use of the past in discussions of the present and future.
5. Attempts to be accessible to wide audiences with differing learning styles, abilities, and interest in history.

What standards were followed to complete this project?

What industry accepted standards and best practices (such as AAM, AASLH, SAA, NCPH, etc.) did you enlist to complete this project? If appropriate, how did you project incorporate ADA standards and promote inclusive practices?

IMPACT STATEMENT

Using the space provided by each question, provide information as it relates to the impact of your project on the nominee(s) and the public.

What was the impact of the project on your organization(s)?

Please explain the impact on your organization from an internal perspective as well as any public benefit derived from its completion. Highlight visitation statistics or patrons served for interpretive programs.

How could this project be an example to others?

Expand on how this project could serve as an example for other organizations to follow. How could others replicate this project?

FAQ: MINNESOTA HISTORY AWARDS

For the project date window (July 1, 2025 to October 1, 2026), does the project have to be completed within that timeframe or can it end later?

Your project must be completed within the award timeframe but can start at any date predating that timeframe. Completed is defined as the product has been produced and made available to the public or governing body. The nominee should have allowed time to gather statistics to demonstrate project impact such as attendance at public programs, visitation rate for new exhibition, number of screenings for a film with attendance at screenings, or number of books sold.

Can I provide additional information for each question on the nomination form in a separate document if it does not fit within the space allowed?

No, the space and character limit provided is what is allowed for providing relevant information to the committee.

For the letters of critical testimony, can we have our mayor and chamber director (or similar community or government official) write them?

At least one letter of critical testimony must come from a museum or history professional. This is defined as someone who is currently active or was previously active and has now retired in the museum field or practice of public history. For example, you could ask a staff member of a neighboring county historical society, staff of a professional museum association, or local university professor to provide a letter.

Letters from community leaders or government officials are accepted for one letter of critical testimony, but it must directly address the project's impact on the community, impact on the organization, and how it is an example of exceptional leadership for the local history community. It cannot simply be a letter of praise for the organization.



Letter writers must be free of conflicts of interests due to relationships with the nominator, nominee(s), or project. For example, letter writers cannot be employed or volunteer with the nominating organization, a spouse or partner of a nominating organization's employee, nor contracted with the nominated project.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

NOMINEE INFORMATION

These questions provide basic background information on the nominee.

To be an eligible nominee, the individual must have met or exceeded the 25 years of service guideline within the award timeframe. The nominee must have also made a substantial contribution to the local history community in Minnesota through regional, statewide, or national efforts.

EXAMPLE



Jane Doe has served as a collections manager at the Acme County Historical Society for 40 years. During that time, she served as founding member of the Lakes Region History Assembly as well as Secretary for 6 years, Vice Chair for 2 years, Chair for 2 years, and project manager on three LRHA projects during its 30 years of existence. In this example, Ms. Doe is an eligible nominee.

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

The nominator is the person that MALHM will discuss questions regarding nominations and contact once a decision is reached, so make sure the information provided is accurate.

NOMINEE BACKGROUND

This section allows the committee to get to know the individual being nominated for an award. Please provide as much information as you are able within the space provided.

Tell us about the nominee.

To answer this question, the nominator should include information related to the nominee's background (work and volunteer history as it relates to history-related experiences) and any relevant information needed to get to know the individual.

Please provide a resume of the nominee.

Include a resume of the individual with start and end dates for applicable work/volunteer service to achieve the award. For start and end dates, please include month and year.

NOMINATION STATEMENT

In what ways has this individual had an impact on their organization?

Within the space provided, explain the nominee's impact on their current organization.

In what ways has this individual had an impact within their region of the state, statewide, or on a national level to nurture or grow the work of local history & the history field.

Expand on the nominee's impact beyond their individual organization. Examples would include:

- Serving on the board of a regional partnership group or consortium
- Serving on a statewide board or committee (such as MALHM, Minnesota Association of Museums, or Historic Resources Advisory Committee)
- Serving in national efforts (such as AASLH Awards Committee or peer reviewer for IMLS grants)

What are some major accomplishments of the nominee or awards received by the nominee during their service to local history in Minnesota?

List any major accomplishments completed or awards that the nominee received during their tenure. Examples could include:

- Completing a \$3 million museum expansion
- Digitizing a museum's entire collection
- Local advocate for historic preservation
- Award from the community or receiving an AASLH award for a project

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

☐ **Two (2) letters of critical testimony**

These letters should come from museum or public history professionals, but not the person submitting the nomination. No more than one letter can come from a community leader outside the history field. Each letter should address the nominee's demonstration of exceptional leadership and the impact on the community or constituency(ies) served.

Letter writers must be free of conflicts of interest due to relationships with the nominator or nominee. For example, letter writers cannot be the spouse/partner of the nominator or nominee.

☐ **Photographs**

Each nomination should include a headshot of the nominee in a high resolution .jpeg format to be used for publication, if awarded. Other photographs of the nominee at work, receiving awards, or with colleagues are helpful as well.

☐ **Samples of the nominee's work**

This would include published materials, completed project materials, and media releases or articles.

FAQ: LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

For this award, does the nominee need to demonstrate impact beyond their individual organization?



Yes, the Lifetime Achievement Award program is meant to honor individuals who have impacted the field of local history on a regional, statewide, or national level. An individual's contribution to their local organization, while commendable, should be honored locally and is not the intention of this program (check out the new volunteer recognition program, detailed on MALHM's website!)

Can I provide additional information for each question on the nomination form in a separate document if it does not fit within the space allowed?

No, the space and character limit provided is what is allowed for providing relevant information to the committee.

Are posthumous nominees accepted?

Yes, as long as the nominee met the criteria no earlier than July 1, 2025 and no later than October 1, 2026.

Does the program accept nominations of paid/volunteer individuals who are in the middle of their service?

Yes, as long as the individual has achieved the 25 year minimum threshold. While the lifetime achievement award has historically been awarded to commemorate career or service transitions and milestones, the committee is happy to evaluate any nominee meeting the minimum requirements.

For individuals who are retiring or passed away, do they need to achieve the exact mark of 25 years for an award?

Yes, but the committee, at their discretion, may make an exception for individuals that are or were within a short time period of achieving that status.