



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS *HISTORY ALIVE!*

Proposal Deadline: March 1, 2025

EMAIL materials to warmack@wvhumanities.org or MAIL to 1310 Kanawha Blvd E, Charleston, WV 25301

History Alive! presenters *become* the historical character they portray and deliver presentations in first-person style. **Research is the foundation of the *History Alive!* program.** Presentations are based on the journals, letters, speeches, and documents from the historical character's life.

History Alive! presentations are not scripted, one-person plays, but are designed to promote a dialogue between the historical character and the audience, providing the opportunity to ask questions of the character.

Presentations are given for schools, service clubs, historical societies, civic groups, historic properties, libraries, festivals, museums, parks, and community events throughout West Virginia. Presenters must be able to travel the state for presentations. In an average year, each presenter usually gives 10-20 presentations in different counties.

WHAT DOES A *HISTORY ALIVE!* PRESENTATION LOOK LIKE?

Every *History Alive!* presentation has three elements:

1. **A Monologue:** The character introduces the historical, social and political issues that he/she represents.
Time: 15-25 minutes.
2. **The Audience Questions the Character:**
Here's where the presenter's knowledge is tested. The character initiates a discussion with the audience and asks for questions. This allows opportunity for the audience to question, debate and disagree with the character. Time: 15 minutes.
3. **The Audience Questions the Presenter:**
The presenter "breaks character" and answers questions as a researcher, rather than as the character.
Time: 5-10 minutes.

Who Do We Want?

Proposals are sought for portrayals of influential people from all walks of life **who have made important contributions to state, national or international history** that would **interest general audiences** across the state. Explorers, inventors, musicians, statesmen, artists, authors, educators, military leaders, athletes, scientists, business and labor leaders, activists, groundbreakers, and others from all walks of life and any period of history are eligible for consideration. Individuals without statewide name recognition are not likely to be selected.

Important points to consider about the program and your proposal:

- **Preference will be given to proposals for individuals who actually lived and are now dead.** Proposals for fictional or living characters, or characters currently on the roster, will not be considered.
- The Council will consider proposals for composite characters connected to West Virginia history: “everyman/everywoman” characters such as a coal miner, suffragist, or folklife practitioner. Composite characters are generally more difficult to formulate—if considering one, feel free to contact Council program officer Kyle Warmack at warmack@wvhumanities.org with questions.
- The Council will consider proposals for previous roster characters.
- *History Alive!* presentations are based on first-person documents -- letters, diaries, official documents, speeches, etc. Proposals must include a well-conceived research plan identifying primary source materials to be used in the development of the character. Successful proposals will show a diversity of primary sources with thorough bibliographies.
- Proposed characters from cultures that do not use the written word will also be considered. In those cases, it is critical for the applicant to articulate how the research and presentation will be developed in the absence of first-person materials.
- Make the character statement count! This is your chance to make the case for the historical significance of your character. Include important contributions, lasting influence, major accomplishments, and your best argument for why this person is important to history. Assume the reviewers of your proposal have never heard of your character no matter how famous you believe them to be.
- Characters without statewide or national name recognition are less likely to be selected.
- New characters must pass an audition before joining the roster.
- To view the up-to-date roster of characters, visit the link below. Proposals for characters currently on the roster will not be considered. <https://wvhumanities.org/programs/history-alive/history-alive-roster/>
- Presenters are paid a stipend by the Council for each presentation, and necessary lodging costs are paid by the host group.
- Presenters must be organized and are responsible for conducting themselves in a professional manner. They are required to maintain their own schedule of appearances, submit evaluations and paperwork for payment, and fulfill their scheduled obligations as representatives of the Council.

A Note About Indigenous, Native American, or First Nations Characters

Native Americans were the caretakers of the area now known as West Virginia long before the arrival of European colonists, and have been important to its development as part of the United States ever since. Due to historical inequalities in representation, it is imperative that proposals for Native American *History Alive!* characters include endorsements from federally recognized tribes and nations, or officially affiliated organizations (such as the Museum of the Cherokee Indian). If you are submitting a proposal for a Native American character, please include **at least two letters of recommendation** from tribal governments or affiliate organizations *related to your character's historical identity*. These references will be verified by West Virginia Humanities Council staff during the proposal review process.

Selection Process

History Alive! roster slots are highly competitive. New proposals are considered every two years. If your proposal is selected in February, you will be issued a research/costume stipend to prepare for a full audition for the Council selection committee in August or September. Selected characters will serve on the roster effective from November 1 of the current year through October 31 of the following year, and may be renewed at that time.

Final selection is based on:

1. Submission of a *complete* proposal that contains all the required research information as listed in these directions.
2. Effective presentation skills and knowledge of the character as shown in the audition.

Proposals are reviewed by representatives from the Council program committee, board of directors, and invited scholars. This review committee determines which proposals, if any, are selected to advance to an audition.

In making their decisions, the committee considers the overall balance of the “type” of characters already represented on the roster (*e.g.* Are there too many authors? Is the 20th century overrepresented? etc.), as well as budget constraints, and uses their best judgment regarding what characters they think will be of greatest interest to a wide variety of audiences all over the state.

Selection of a proposal does not mean that the character will be added to the History Alive! roster. Potential new characters are required to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the character and effective presentation skills in an audition. Final roster decisions will be made only after the audition process is complete. Sometimes new characters are not added to the roster as a result of the audition.

Current characters may be rotated off the roster so that new ones can be added. In determining which roster characters to remove, the selection committee considers length of active service on the roster, demand for the character, and the overall topical balance of the roster.

IMPORTANT:

The goal of *History Alive!* is to deliver **educational** programs in an interesting way. It is intended to engage audiences in a dialogue with a character from history that has been brought to life through scholarly research. Presentations are developed through scholarship and analysis of the character - not by memorizing a script. This supports the overall mission of the West Virginia Humanities Council to make high-quality public humanities programs available to all West Virginians.

PROPOSAL CHECKLIST ON NEXT PAGE

Proposal Checklist

DEADLINE: MARCH 1, 2025

All proposals must be *computer printed or typed* and include the following:

- _____ **Character Statement:** This statement should provide a basic biographical sketch and clearly describe the historical significance of the character. Limit to five, double-spaced, typed pages. *(Required for each proposed character.)*

 - _____ **Bibliography:** divided into two parts
 - a. materials written **by** the character
 - b. materials written **about** the character*(Required for each proposed character.)*

 - _____ **Research Plan:** This one-page plan must explain how you will approach the research, where and when the research will be undertaken, and what primary sources will be used in developing the character. *(Required for each proposed character.)*

 - _____ **Your resume:** *(Not required from current History Alive! roster members.)*

 - _____ **Two references:** Provide names, addresses, and phone numbers for two people who are familiar with your abilities as a public speaker. *(Not required from current History Alive! roster members.)*
- If planning to submit a Native American historical figure for consideration, additional references and/or credentials may be required. As there is no universal consensus among federally recognized tribes and other American Indian groups regarding living history portrayals, the Council considers any such proposals on a case-by-case basis. Contact Council Program Officer Kyle Warmack for further details at warmack@wvhumanities.org.
- _____ **Photograph:** one photo of the applicant *(does not need to be in costume)*

Please limit the contents of your proposal to the above materials.
Do not submit additional materials.

Submit proposals to:

History Alive!
West Virginia Humanities Council
1310 Kanawha Blvd., East
Charleston, WV 25301
304-346-8500

or email as a collated PDF file to
warmack@wvhumanities.org