



Board of Directors FAQs

Thank you for your interest in joining the PA Humanities' Board of Directors! This is an exciting opportunity to be part of a committed team illuminating possibilities for Pennsylvanians and elevating our shared humanity to create stronger communities and fulfilling lives.

In 2026, we are especially interested in candidates with experience in fundraising, philanthropy, investment, financial oversight, rural communities, libraries, Out of School Time (OST), youth education, and other areas that may strengthen the board's work.

Here is basic information about what PA Humanities requires from its board members. Please review this document to assess if board service with us is the right fit for you.

What does PA Humanities do?

PA Humanities is an independent nonprofit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities and part of a national network of 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils.

Our mission is to champion the humanities as a means to spark civic engagement, build community, educate, inspire, and make long-lasting change. We imagine a future where all Pennsylvanians use our shared humanity to enhance personal growth, connect communities, and foster positive change.

We put the humanities into action through programs, grants, research, advocacy, and partnerships across the Commonwealth. Our work helps people build connections, find common ground, learn from one another, and shape the future of their communities.

We also illuminate possibilities with the humanities. We do that with poetry, storytelling, even research – if it's through Rain Poetry where young people's hopes in the form of haikus are illuminated with a drop of water, PA Heart & Soul where small town residents collect stories to discover together what they love most about their communities, or Cultural Dynamics where we asked the Philadelphia cultural sector, "If you could wave a magic wand, what's one thing you would change to change to strengthen Phill's arts & culture experience?"

PA Humanities strategically centers people and human experience; builds partnerships and a broader movement for the humanities; and strengthens capacity to create lasting impact. We are leading a movement that elevates our shared humanity as a powerful tool for personal well-being, inclusive communities, and transformative change.

You can learn more about us at pahumanities.org. We also encourage you to explore our [Let's digital flipbook](#) and our [Let's Rise video series](#).

What is our relationship with the NEH?

We are a Federal/State Partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The councils were established to fulfill the requirement in the agency's enabling legislation--National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965--as amended, that the Endowment support humanities programs "in each of the several states."

The Partnership makes humanities education and lifelong learning readily available at the local level, tailored to local interests and needs and drawing upon local resources, traditions and heritage.

What is the composition of the Board?

The Board is composed of 18 regular members elected by the Board and up to 6 members appointed by the Governor.

Who is eligible to serve on the Board?

Board membership is limited to individuals who, at the time of their election or appointment, are either residents of Pennsylvania or employed full-time in Pennsylvania.

How long do you serve?

3 years. Elected to start November 1st. Board members may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms (i.e. 6 years). Members may be appointed by the Board to fill vacancies.

The term of a member appointed by the Governor of Pennsylvania terminates on October 31 (the end of our Fiscal Year) following the expiration of the appointing Governor's term. A Governor's appointee may be elected for one regular term not exceeding three years following the end of their term.

What are the fundraising expectations for Board members?

100% Board participation is a tangible demonstration of the Board's leadership and its commitment to the PA Humanities: it is also required by many funders. Each board member is expected to make a personal financial contribution during each year of their service.

A Board member's annual gift to PA Humanities should be one of their top three contributions in a given year and at a level in line with their personal financial circumstances. Other opportunities to give, like special fundraisers or campaigns, are optional and based on the Board member's interests and capacity to give.

All Board members are required to assist PA Humanities staff with fundraising efforts and the organization's institutional advancement -- from identifying prospects in your network to thanking donors for their gifts, and you will be provided with guidance on the best ways to collaborate with staff on these efforts.

How much time is required to serve?

We estimate a time commitment of 7-10 hours per month for board meetings, committee phone conferences, orientation sessions, and special events, including preparation time.

When and how often are Board and committee meetings?

The full Board meets at least 3 times per year, with at least one in person, if funding is available— either in Harrisburg, Philadelphia, or Pittsburgh. The meetings are conducted during the day and may require arriving the night before. The meetings are typically on the third Thursday in October, February, and June. If this schedule is a problem, please advise the Governance Committee.

Committees meet at least once between board meetings in order to establish annual priorities and accomplish certain tasks by established deadlines. Attendance, usually by phone or Zoom video conference, is essential for the committees to do their work.

Committees: Audit, Development, Executive, Finance, and Governance.

Are there any orientation or mentoring sessions for new members?

An orientation session will occur by Zoom or in person. The Governance Committee arranges other orientation sessions as needed on finance and other topics. Each new member is assigned a mentor Board member for the first year to introduce them to the organization and to answer questions.

What other service opportunities are there?

Government Relations Ad hoc Group: We work to deepen and expand relationships with advocacy partners and government to sustain, increase, and diversify our funding and partnerships. Core to our work is an annual cycle of advocacy activities corresponding with federal and state budget cycles. We visit with legislators in DC and Harrisburg and district offices and engage with them at PA Humanities events around the state. We also present our case by writing letters, sending emails, and making telephone calls.

Strategic Planning Ad hoc Group: The Ad hoc Strategic Planning Group is guiding the board and staff in the planning and implementation process in collaboration with an outside consultant. Our strategic framework has set directions, goals, and strategies for 2025-2027 that affirm the organization's core purpose and build on a decade of learning and growth, a recent rebranding, and exciting 50th-year anniversary programming like Rain Poetry.

Events Attendance: Attend at least one PA Humanities-related program, meeting, presentation, or event per year. This could include attending a story-gathering program at a PA Heart & Soul town, meeting with state agency staff about funding, presenting our work to a local legislator, representing us at a local awards ceremony -- and more.

What is the selection process?

After you complete an online interest form, it will be reviewed by the Governance Committee. Candidates who look to be a good fit will be contacted for an interview.

Upon recommendation by the Governance Committee, the candidate's name will be placed on the slate for election by the Board at a meeting or by unanimous email vote.

Given the various needs of the board, many times we have more candidates than slots to fill. In that case, you may be put in the pipeline for future consideration or volunteer opportunities. Your name may be forwarded to the Governor's Office for recommendation for appointment, too.

If elected, board members are invited to attend a transition meeting at the end of the fiscal year to meet their fellow board members and learn about activities in their first year.

What is the purpose of the Board and what is its approach to governance?

The purpose of our Board is to provide thoughtful leadership that advances our strategic plan through your talent, service, advocacy, and ongoing financial contributions. We are energized volunteers who are passionate about PA Humanities' mission and work collaboratively with other Board members, the Executive Director, and staff.

We are a board with a broad range of experiences and involvement in all PA communities. We believe that the Board's role is to demonstrate thoughtful leadership, to ensure that PA Humanities establishes caring relationships where everyone can thrive, and to maintain the trust of the community it serves by being clear and transparent in fulfilling our mission, prudent and ethical in its activities, and accountable for its actions. Our meetings focus on institutional advancement, policy-making, and assessing our impact.

As a member of the Federal/State Partnership, we are good stewards of NEH funds, spending public funds wisely, evaluating our impact, and communicating regularly with NEH, our partners, and constituents. The Board carries out ongoing strategic planning through self-assessments, maintains strong governance and business practices, develops diversified funding, and controls risks by the provision of general liability insurance.