

# **Code of Ethics**

## **Nebraska Humanities Council Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities**

### **I. Mission**

*When we ask who we are and what our lives ought to mean, we are using the humanities. The Nebraska Humanities Council enhances the quality of life in communities across our state through programs that study the human race, its achievements, its creations, its dreams and aspirations, its failures and triumphs. The NHC promotes a better understanding of Nebraska—who we are and where we have been—to build a better future.*

All of the Council's (NHC) programs support that mission and all who work for or on behalf of the Council and Foundation (NFH) are loyal to that mission and purpose. The NHC's mission is responsive to the constituency and communities served by the Council and Foundation and is of value to the society at large.

### **II. Personal and Professional Integrity**

The board members, staff and volunteers of the Council and Foundation act with honesty, integrity and openness in all their dealings as representatives of the Nebraska Humanities Council and Foundation. The NHC and NFH promote a working environment that values respect, fairness and integrity.

The Nebraska Humanities Council and Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities hold as common values:

- Commitment to the value of the humanities to the common good;
- Accountability to the public;
- Commitment to all applicable laws, regulations, and international conventions;
- Respect for the worth and dignity of individuals;
- Respect for pluralism, diversity, and inclusiveness;
- Transparency, integrity and honesty;
- Responsible stewardship of resources; and,
- Commitment to excellence and to maintaining the public trust.

### **III. Governance**

The Nebraska Humanities Council and Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities have active governing bodies that are responsible for setting the mission and strategic direction of the organizations and oversight of the finances, operations, and policies of the Council and Foundation that:

- Ensure that their board members have the requisite skills and experience to carry out their duties and that all members understand and fulfill their governance duties acting for the benefit of the organization and its public purpose; the elected board members may serve up to two, three-year terms and the gubernatorial

appointees to the Council serve at the pleasure of the Governor; the Council and Foundation will evaluate their performance as a group and as individuals no less than every three years.

- Avoids conflict of interest or the appearance thereof by requiring all board members and staff to annually identify their employer and that of their spouse or partner as well as all non-profit and corporate boards to which they belong; all board members shall recuse themselves from any vote involving transactions with entities thus identified;
- Ensure that the Council and Foundation conduct all transactions and dealings with integrity and honesty;
- Ensure that the NHC and NFH promote working relationships with board members, staff, volunteers, and program beneficiaries that are based on mutual respect, fairness and openness;
- Ensure that the Council is fair and inclusive in its hiring and promotion policies and practices for all board, staff and volunteer positions;
- Ensure that policies of the organization are in writing, clearly articulated and officially adopted;
- Ensure that the resources of the organization are responsibly and prudently managed;
- Ensure that the organization has the capacity to carry out its programs effectively.
- The Nebraska Humanities Council is responsible for the hiring, firing, and annual review of the performance of the executive director, and ensures that the compensation of the executive director is reasonable and appropriate; the Council sets salary ranges for staff positions no less than every three years.
- The Council and Foundation ensure that the executive director and appropriate staff provide the board members with timely and comprehensive information so that the boards of directors can effectively carry out their duties;

#### **IV. Legal Compliance**

The Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities are knowledgeable of and comply with all laws, regulations and applicable international conventions.

The NHC staff shall ensure that the Council's and Foundation's document retention policy is strictly observed.

Board members, staff, volunteers, and constituents who have credible information on illegal practices or violations of adopted policies are encouraged to identify such misbehavior promptly. A written report of the violation should be sent to the executive director and the chair of the Council, and they shall present the charge to the NHC Executive Committee for action. If the executive director or the chair are complicit in the charge, the report should be sent to the Council's vice chair. The chair of the Council will verify to the complainant that the complaint has been addressed. The Council and Foundation will not tolerate any retaliation against an individual lodging a charge.

## **V. Responsible Stewardship**

The Nebraska Humanities Council and Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities manage their funds responsibly and prudently.

- The primary purpose of the Council and Foundation is to support public humanities programs. An adequate amount will be spent on administrative expenses to ensure effective accounting systems, internal controls, competent staff, and other expenditures critical to professional management:
- The Council compensates staff, and any others who may receive compensation, reasonably and appropriately;
- The Foundation's and Council's fundraising costs are reasonable, recognizing the variety of factors that affect fundraising costs;
- The NHC and NFH ensure that all spending practices and policies are fair, reasonable and appropriate to fulfill their mission;
- The Council and Foundation will maintain a reserve fund equal to six-months of their operating budget: Organizations do not accumulate operating funds excessively;
- The NHC and NFH will collaborate with the Nebraska Arts Council to prudently draw from their Nebraska Cultural Endowment funds consistent with donor intent and to support the public purpose of their organizations;
- The NHC and NFH shall not provide loans to or make other similar arrangements with board members, staff, or volunteers or their family members; and
- All financial reports are factually accurate and complete in all material respects.

## **VI. Openness and Disclosure**

The Nebraska Humanities Council and Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities provide comprehensive and timely information to the public, the media, and all stakeholders through the Council's newsletter, magazine and annual report, and website. The NHC and NFH will respond in a timely manner to reasonable requests for information. All information about the NHC/NFH will fully and honestly reflect their policies and practices.

Basic informational data about the organization, such as the Form 990, audited financial statements, Council and Foundation directors and staff, grant and humanities resource center applications, and other previews and compilations will be posted on the website.

All solicitation materials accurately represent the Council's and Foundation's policies and practices and will reflect the dignity of program beneficiaries. All financial, organizational, and program reports will be complete and accurate in all material respects.

## **VII. Program Evaluation**

The Nebraska Humanities Council annually reviews program effectiveness and incorporates lessons learned into future programs and into its strategic plan. The Council and Foundation are committed to improving program and their own organizational

effectiveness. The NHC and NFH are responsive to changes in public humanities best-practices and are responsive to the needs of their constituencies.

### **VIII. Inclusiveness and Diversity**

The Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities are committed to inclusiveness and the staff, board and volunteers reflect diversity in order to enrich their programmatic effectiveness. The Council and Foundation take purposeful steps to promote inclusiveness in their hiring, retention, promotion, board recruitment and constituencies served.

### **IX. Fundraising**

The Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities are truthful in their solicitation materials. The NHC and NFH respect the privacy concerns of individual donors and expend funds consistent with donor intent. The Council and Foundation disclose important and relevant information to potential donors. In raising funds from the public, the Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities will respect the rights of donors, as follows:

- To be informed of the mission of the organization, the way the resources will be used and their capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes;
- To be informed of the identity of those serving on the organization's governing board and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities;
- To have access to the organization's most recent financial reports;
- To be assured their gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given;
- To receive appropriate acknowledgement and recognition;
- To be assured that information about their donations is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by the law;
- To expect that all relationships with individuals representing organizations of interest to the donor will be professional in nature;
- To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees of the organizations or hired solicitors;
- To have the opportunity for their names to be deleted from mailing lists that an organization may intend to share; and,
- To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These ten points are taken from A Donor Bill of Rights, developed by the American Association of Fund Raising Counsel, the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, and the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and endorsed by INDEPENDENT SECTOR.

## **X. Grantmaker Guidelines**

The Nebraska Humanities Council views its role as a grantmaker as central to its mission and it believes that it has particular responsibilities in carrying out this part of its program. The Council board members and staff:

- Will award grants competitively on the basis of widely known criteria;
- Will have constructive relations with grantseekers based on mutual respect and shared goals;
- Will communicate clearly and on a timely basis with potential grantees;
- Will treat grantseekers and grantees fairly and with respect;
- Will respect the expertise of grantseekers in their fields of knowledge;
- Will seek to understand and respect the organizational capacity and needs of grantseeking organizations; and,
- Will respect the integrity of the mission of grantseeking organizations.

Adopted by the Nebraska Humanities Council and the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities on September 21, 2007.