



Smithsonian
National Museum of Natural History

Recovering Voices
Department of
Anthropology 10th and
Constitution NW
Washington, DC
20560-0112

Recovering Voices Community Research Program 2026

Overview and Proposal Guidelines

I. Overview

Recovering Voices seeks to increase access to the Smithsonian's diverse collections—archival, biological, and cultural—in support of interdisciplinary research aimed at language and knowledge documentation and revitalization. The purpose of the Community Research Program is to support Indigenous communities in their efforts to save, document, and enliven their languages, cultures, and knowledge systems.

The funding brings groups of community scholars to the Smithsonian to examine cultural objects, natural history collections, and archival documents related to their heritage language and knowledge systems and engage in a dialogue with each other and with Smithsonian staff. Interdisciplinary and collaborative projects are encouraged.

Recovering Voices staff are happy to answer any questions regarding the proposal guidelines and process. Please email your questions to recoveringvoices@si.edu.

II. Deadline and Submission Instructions

The deadline for this round of proposals is **January 15th, 2026**. Proposals submitted by this date will be reviewed for projects suggesting a visit to the Smithsonian collections. These 2026 guidelines supersede all previous guidelines.

To apply, please submit your proposal electronically to: recoveringvoices@si.edu

Or by post: Recovering Voices Program
Department of Anthropology
Smithsonian Institution MRC 112
P.O. Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012

Applications sent by post must be postmarked by January 15th, 2026. Please notify the Recovering Voices office by email if your proposal is being sent by mail.

III. Research Support & Responsibilities

Applicants may request up to a maximum of \$10,000 (USD). All recipients of a funded proposal must wait at least one (1) year after receiving funding to apply for additional support from Recovering Voices.

While Recovering Voices will provide help in the logistical planning and organization of your visit, it is up to you to ensure there is a direct point of contact with whom we can coordinate.

Your responsibilities:

1. Assign a Project Lead (point of contact) and provide their email, telephone number, and other pertinent contact information. Please indicate who this is on the Cover Page of your application. This Project Lead is also responsible for scheduling and keeping to the proposed timeline for the visit.
2. After the visit, you are required to submit a final report and assessment that documents the visit, goals met, and feedback for our program. (See section VI: Final Project Reporting & Assessment).

Recovering Voices responsibilities:

1. Video, photo, and/or audio documentation of the research visit is created in order to share with the community researchers (this does not preclude the awardee from creating their own video/audio documentation).
2. It is encouraged for you to work with us to incorporate video and/or audio recording documentation into your project goals during the visit. USB drives with all video, photo, and audio recordings will be sent to participants after the visit.
3. Logistics and administrative support to book travel and lodging; support in navigating the Smithsonian Institution and Washington, DC; reserving time in the repositories and support in collections.

IV. Proposal Requirements

Please submit your proposal as one complete pdf file to be considered by the review committee. The proposal must contain the following elements in the order listed below:

1. Cover page
2. Project Description (2-3 pages)
3. Project Timeline
4. Budget and Budget Justification
5. Ethical Review of Human Research (if necessary)
6. Letter(s) of Support
7. CV or bio of Project Lead and bios for all project participants

1. **Cover page:** Please use the form linked [here](#).
2. **Project Description:**
 - a. **Rationale:** The significance and importance of the project and contribution it will make to language and/or knowledge documentation and/or revitalization. Explain the focus of the project, the reason for carrying out this research at the Smithsonian Institution, and the need and urgency of the research.
 - b. **Background Information:** History of the project and/or research team as well as prior related research or collaborative efforts. Explain how the project builds upon previous work; note if any team members have previously conducted research with Smithsonian collections.
 - c. **Participants:** List of participants, their roles in the project and rationale for their participation.
 - d. **Collections:** General description of the Smithsonian collections at the relevant repository that will be consulted for the project. If the project is connected to another institution's collections or personnel, please explain this. Explain why these particular collections were selected; how many days will be spent in each location (if visiting more than one).
 - i. Prior to submitting the proposal, applicants **must** consult with the relevant Smithsonian curatorial/collections staff regarding the materials of interest (contact information is available below). When you contact curatorial/collections staff, please tell them you are applying to this Recovering Voices program, they will inform you about the availability of collections you wish to access. Proposals that do not show consultation with curatorial/collections staff will be considered incomplete. Please allow at least one week for responses from curatorial/collections staff.
 - ii. The following are links and contact information to the most visited repositories for Recovering Voices projects.
 - Anthropology Collections and Archives at NMNH
 - **Collections:** Reference the link below to contact the appropriate Curator for materials of interest and approval, and Cc: recoveringvoices@si.edu for any correspondence sent. <https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/staff>
 - **Archives:** naa@si.edu
 - http://anthropology.si.edu/archives_collections.html

- National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)
 - Collections: nmaicollections@si.edu
 - Archives: nmaiarchives@si.edu
<http://nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/>
 - National Museum of Natural History (NMNH)
 - Botany, Entomology, Invertebrate Zoology, Mineral Sciences, Vertebrate Zoology <http://www.mnh.si.edu/rc/>
- iii. For an overview of Smithsonian collections and archives repositories, please see the supplementary document, *[SI Collections Supplement](#)*.

Please note that each museum's collections and archives are organized separately. For example, the NMAI object collection is a separate repository from the NMAI document archive; NMNH and NMAI collections are housed in two separate facilities. Please specify in the application exactly which repositories will be part of the research project.

- e. **Methodology:** Explain how the research will be conducted (ie. examining archives, studying objects, forming intergenerational discussion groups, etc.); outline the plan for preparation and the follow up to the visit. Note all resources necessary for the project during the visit (e.g., audio recorder, computer/internet access, etc.).
- f. **Outcomes & Dissemination:** Description of projected outcomes, including a detailed explanation as to how the research conducted in Smithsonian collections will be utilized post-visit. Discuss who will be involved after the visit; how results will be disseminated to the community; how the project supports research and revitalization activities. Projects with solid plans for dissemination of research results in the community will be given priority.
3. **Project Timeline:** Schedule of the various phases of the project, including pre- and post-visit plans, and proposed dates for collections research.
- a. Please note that collections cannot be accessed on federal holidays as stated at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/federal-holidays/#url=2017>. Additional information about collections availability is available in the *[SI Collections Supplement](#)*.
- b. Include phases of preparation, the Smithsonian visit, and follow-up, outcomes, and dissemination.
4. **Budget and Justification:** Please use the *[budget template](#)* linked here and provide an itemized budget of the project, including matching funds if any. Applicants must also provide a budget justification narrative that explains the rationale and significance of all

expenses. The budget justification narrative should correspond to the budget in the proposal and calculate expenses in an easily understood manner.

- Disallowed Expenses
 - Salaries or stipends
 - Laptops, tablet computers, cameras and any other equipment.
 - Allowed Expenses
 - Travel costs (airfare, ground transportation, etc)
 - Lodging
 - Per diem
 - Research materials
 - Flights will be booked by Recovering Voices at approved government rates. For many standard airfare estimates, find the government rate by consulting GSA's listing of city-pair airfares at <http://cpsearch.fas.gsa.gov/>
 - Use the 'YCA' fare price, double it for round-trips, and add \$50 for taxes & fees.
 - Search prices for all DC area airports (IAD, DCA, BWI) by selecting "Washington, DC [WAS]". If multiple fare options are available, depending on the airports selected, pick mid-range or higher fares to use as an estimate since there is no guarantee of availability for the lowest fare.
 - Lodging will be booked by Recovering Voices at approved government rates. Use the GSA lodging rates for Washington, DC found in the [Budget Supplement Sheet](#).
 - For additional clarification please reference [Example Budget Justification](#).
5. **Ethical Review of Human Research:** If applicable, we request applicants use guidelines for the ethical conduct of research with human subjects at their institution or community to determine if formal ethical or Institutional Review Board (IRB) review is necessary. If there has been a formal review, please provide a copy of any approval or determination made by your institution, community, or tribe.
 6. **Letters of Support:** Applicants are encouraged to provide one to two letters of support from individuals who are knowledgeable about the project, but are not a part of it. If possible, applicants should get letters from relevant members of the community involved; these can include tribal or local authority, government or council.
 7. **CV/Bio:** Please attach a 2-page CV or bio of the Project Lead, and bios for each project participant.

V. Evaluation Criteria

The criteria below will be used by the review committee to evaluate proposals, each question is worth 10 points. Please ensure that the proposal responds to these criteria.

1. What Smithsonian collections are being used in the project?
2. What is the significance of the project and the contribution it will make to the research, documentation, and/or potential revitalization of endangered languages and/or knowledge? Is there a stated urgency that increases the importance of the project?
3. What is the anticipated impact of the project for the community? What is the impact in the context of other funding and resources available to the application?
4. Is the research feasible and appropriate with the proposed methods, timescale, outcomes and requested resources? Does the methodology lead to the stated outcomes? How does the project build upon previous work?
5. Is there a feasible plan for the use and dissemination of research? Is it clear that the research will be shared outside of the group to the community at large? Is the larger community engaged or involved in the research?
6. Is the leadership structure, or collaboration, driven by members of the community and the community's research, documentation, and/or revitalization needs?

VI. Final Project Reporting & Assessment

Support recipients must commit to submitting a final report to the Recovering Voices Program. This report will include the following elements:

1. An account of the daily activities of the project including preparation work, objects or archives analyzed, knowledge gained, and follow-up work completed.
2. One page summary of goals met during the visit.
3. Individual responses to an evaluation form provided by Recovering Voices.

Recovering Voices is assessing the impact of the Community Research Program. We ask groups whose research is supported by Recovering Voices to take part in our program assessment efforts when contacted. This will be an assessment of our program, not of your research.