



## Center for Hmong Studies Fellowship

**Reports To:** Project Manager, Vice President Youa Vang

The Ramsey County Historical Society has partnered with the Center for Hmong Studies, located at 1245 Carroll Ave, St Paul, MN 55104 to provide paid fellowships to up to **four** talented individuals interested in the preservation and promotion of Hmong history and culture.

RCHS's mission, values, land acknowledgement statement, and equity and inclusion statement are all included in the "RCHS Commitment to DEAI" document. Applicants are encouraged to review this document before/during their application process. RCHS is strongly committed to equity and was one of the first 51 museums in the country to complete the nation-wide Facing Change program by the American Alliance of Museums. BIPOC individuals comprise approximately 30% of the board of directors and BIPOC candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.

- Hybrid fellowship
- Funding: Maximum of \$10,059.50 per Fellow.
  - \$6,900 for fellowship;
  - \$2,000 final project allowance;
  - \$375 technology stipend;
  - Up to \$784.50 for workshop, meeting, mileage, and other program expenses = **\$10,059.50**

### **Commitment:**

- Attend four 3-4-hour workshops in Fall/Winter 2024
- Time for reading
- 240 hours (12 hours/week over 21 weeks from January 2025-May 2025) for work plan and timeline of project
- Complete project
- Panel discussion with Ramsey County Historical Society for a History Revealed program on Final Project in May 2025, will include preparing content for presentation

Fellows will be selected based on their demonstrated interest in, and capacity for learning, passion for preserving culture and history in its various forms, academic or professional accomplishment that demonstrates ability to complete

tasks and communicate effectively, ability to commit the time required, references from reputable sources, and connections to the Hmong community. Fellows will also be selected on their project proposals. These projects should cover areas on how to preserve the Hmong heritage, inform current communities, and inspire future Hmong generations and surrounding communities.

Examples of project submissions include, but are not limited to:

- Documenting Hmong embroidery and the history of the craft
- Exhibiting Hmong dress and variations
- Preserving Hmong language and linguistic speaking techniques
- Preserving and teaching traditional Hmong cuisine
- Documenting the stories of second-generation Hmong Americans and their experiences in our community.

### **Purpose of Fellowship**

Hmong Community Fellows may go on to hold jobs in museums or as consultants that will help bring about much needed systemic change within the field, providing diverse cultural representation that leads to more equitable museums. The program will help provide the Hmong community with the tools needed to maintain intellectual and financial control over their own cultural heritage by making them aware of local collections, resources, and opportunities for life-long learning available for the Hmong public. In addition, the Hmong Community Fellowships will produce content that RCHS and the Center for Hmong Studies can preserve, learn from, and share long into the future. It will help both partner organizations develop a potential pool of skilled workers and achieve their goals of inspiring community-wide awareness of their collections and programs.

Hmong Community Fellows will complete individual projects related to preservation and/or presentation of cultural heritage. These projects will be presented at a special program co-sponsored by RCHS and the Center for Hmong Studies that will be open to the public, providing insight and content that will enhance the understanding of Hmong history in Minnesota.

In a story paralleling Minnesota's Indigenous communities of 50 years ago, Minnesota's Hmong community is interested in preserving its culture, but has not yet developed a sufficient body of individuals with preservation and presentation expertise. This gap between interest and training has been identified by Hmong leaders in the community and this partnership will help begin to address this need.

Minnesota's Hmong community is in a unique position to articulate the ideas and practices of a shifting modern world. Dispersed across the globe, without the advantage of a written script for much of their history, the Hmong are a powerful byproduct of global interactions and international relations. Bonded by a foundation of oral storytelling, a tradition embedded in legends and memory, the Hmong are an example of a global community that has survived despite the influences of dominant cultures and perspectives, the powers of market economies, and the strident pulls of politics.

In order to safeguard the unique cultural heritage of the Hmong people, institutions like the Center for Hmong Studies and the Hmong Cultural Center were created. These young, grassroots organizations are currently focused on educational missions and do not have the bandwidth to create the preservation program required to train future Hmong cultural heritage experts. As a cultural heritage organization that has existed for 75 years, RCHS is well equipped to assist in developing a program of the type required.

This project also addresses (a) needs identified in both partners' strategic plans; (b) public demand for more equitable museums; and (c) RCHS's and the Center for Hmong Studies' ability to meet professional standards.

Both RCHS and the Center for Hmong Studies have an interest in ensuring Hmong culture is preserved, and both believe that this preservation should take place within the community. As museums around the world continue to relinquish institutional control of a community's cultural assets, it is not only appropriate for valuable cultural materials and archives to be preserved within the community itself, it is achievable.

Both RCHS and the Center for Hmong Culture recognize that this is work that will take many years. But it is important that this work begin now, keeping pace with the rapid changes happening across the country. According to the American Alliance of Museums, minority Americans will make up the majority of the nation's population by 2050. Moving too slowly will continue to create barriers to engaging with the diverse communities we aim to serve.

**Geographic focus of project:** Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties.

### **Partnership Program Description**

With a population of more than 62,000, Minneapolis and Saint Paul have the largest concentrations of Hmong people in the nation. Together, these individuals have worked to shape the modern Twin Cities' infrastructure, agriculture, political system, food culture, and much more. However, Minnesota's Hmong population has also endured acts of racism, discrimination, and prejudice, much of it fostered by a lack of understanding, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. RCHS would like to assist the Hmong community with the active preservation and presentation of their cultural heritage and history, which it believes will help foster understanding, inclusion, and belonging and help break some of the barriers to a healthy, equitable Twin Cities.

Established in 2004, the Center for Hmong Studies exists to promote the scholarly interest, the rich legacy, and the complex heritage of the Hmong people. The Center for Hmong Studies is an academic resource center created to track, document, research, develop, and teach the long history, the current conditions, and the future trajectory of an international community in the midst of

transition. In order to meet the needs of a diverse population, the Center for Hmong Studies works to advance a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the Hmong people and the important role they have played in the shaping of the modern world.

In addition to laying the foundation for the field of Hmong Studies, the Center for Hmong Studies also features a robust collection of more than 200,000 archival documents and artifacts. While so much cultural heritage has already been institutionally preserved, there is more to be done in order to protect the precious resources circulating throughout the private spheres of the Hmong community. The Center for Hmong Studies identified a need for representation in the areas of collections, conservation, oral history, and cultural and historical programming. If specialized training was made available, Hmong community members could complete the program and participate in the preservation and presentation of their own cultural heritage.

Fellows will be selected based on their demonstrated interest in, and capacity for, learning; passion for preserving culture and history in its various forms; academic or professional accomplishment that demonstrates ability to complete tasks and communicate effectively; ability to commit the time required; references from reputable sources; and connections to the Hmong community.

Fellows will have an opportunity to select an area of interest and develop a project, completed with the assistance of a Project Manager and guidance from one or more staff members and/or Content Experts. These projects might include completing an oral history with two or three community members, working with the Center for Hmong Studies to catalog a small portion of their collection, or planning a two- or three-part series of public programs that would illustrate effective ways to preserve, document, and display a personal collection.

At the end of the Fellowship, each Fellow will give a short presentation on their project during a History Revealed program (time and location still TBD). This program will be co-sponsored and open to the public in-person and/or online. The purpose of the program is to showcase the results of the Fellowship and to inspire and educate community members. It will also help promote the work of RCHS and the Center for Hmong Studies.

## **Timeline**

**August-September 2024:** RCHS and the Center for Hmong Studies will work with the Project Manager to hire up to four Workshop Facilitators and Content Experts. The Project Manager will also create a Workshop and Meeting schedule for the remainder of the year.

**October-November 2024:** RCHS and the Center for Hmong Studies will host up to four 3-hour Workshops for Community Fellows. Fellows must commit and

attend all four workshops. If a fellow misses any workshops, they will be subject to losing the fellowship.

**November-December 2024:** The Project Manager will work with each Community Fellow to identify their area of further study and solidify Final Project ideas. The Project Manager will assist each Fellow with developing individual work plans, timelines, and budgets.

**January-April 2025:** Community Fellows begin work on Final Projects under the supervision of the Project Manager and guidance from Content Experts in their chosen area of study. Community Fellows with an interest in collections will also work with the Director of the Center for Hmong Studies and/or RCHS's Director of Collections & Exhibitions to complete their projects.

**May 2025:** Community Fellows will work with the Project Manager to create short presentations for a panel discussion with Ramsey County Historical Society for a History Revealed on Final Project in May 2025; the final project will include preparing content for presentation. The filmed program and all projects will be preserved and made available to the public via RCHS's Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center as well as at the Center for Hmong Studies. Fellows may be asked to present with RCHS to the Minnesota Historical Society.

The Hmong Community Fellowship will help solidify the health and equity of the Hmong community. According to a 2021 study published by Metris Arts Consulting, "WE-Making: How Arts & Culture Unite People to Work Toward Community Well-Being," healthy, equitable communities are places that allow people to reach their optimal well-being. "Well-being" encompasses mental and physical health, but also happiness, celebration and preservation of culture, creative responses to trauma, and civic capacity.

### **Confidentiality Agreement**

Respecting the privacy of our clients, donors, members, staff, volunteers, and vendors of the Ramsey County Historical Society itself is a basic value of RCHS. Personal information, financial information, and organizational plans that are not yet public is confidential and should not be disclosed or discussed with anyone outside of the organization. Employees, volunteers, and board members of RCHS may be exposed to information which is confidential and/or privileged and proprietary in nature. It is the policy of RCHS that such information must be kept confidential both during and after employment or volunteer service. Staff and volunteers, including board members, are expected to return materials containing privileged or confidential information at the time of separation from employment or expiration of service. Unauthorized disclosure of confidential or privileged information is a serious violation of this policy and will subject the person(s) who made the unauthorized disclosure to appropriate discipline, including removal/dismissal.

### **Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion**

RCHS is committed to ensuring it preserves and presents our county's history. As we continue our work to incorporate more culturally diverse histories, we have made a commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion that is based on this core idea: RCHS exists serve ALL who call Ramsey County home. To learn more, please see <https://rchs.com/about/deai-statements/> .

### **Acknowledging this Sacred Dakota Land**

Mnisóta Makhóche, the land where the waters are so clear they reflect the clouds, extends beyond the modern borders of Minnesota and is the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Dakhóta (Dakota) people. It is also home to the Anishinaabe and other Indigenous peoples, all who make up a vibrant community in Mnisóta Makhóche. The Ramsey County Historical Society acknowledges that its sites are located on and benefit from these sacred Dakota lands.

RCHS is committed to preserving our past, informing our present, and inspiring our future. Part of doing so is acknowledging the painful history and current challenges facing the Dakota people just as we celebrate the contributions of Dakota and other Indigenous peoples.

Find our full Land Acknowledgment Statement on our website, <https://rchs.com/about/land-acknowledgement-statement/>. This full statement includes actionable ways in which Ramsey County Historical Society pledges to honor the Dakota and other Indigenous peoples of Mnisóta Makhóche.

This program is funded through a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society through the Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment.

**How To Apply:** Hmong Community Fellows will complete individual projects related to preservation and/or presentation of cultural heritage. To apply, fill out the [RFP via Google forms](#) and include a letter of interest by 11:59 PM (CST), September 30, 2024.

RFP: <https://forms.gle/51VRgdsg4QHET6nA6>

Please reach out to Youa Vang at [youa@rchs.com](mailto:youa@rchs.com) with any questions.