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National Endowment for the Humanities Appoints CFVI as Permanent Partner in U.S. Virgin Islands

The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands, praised for its role as interim partner since 2020, will now take on a permanent position to advance humanities programs and preserve the cultural heritage of the territory

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The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has officially appointed the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI) as the permanent jurisdictional humanities council for the U.S. Virgin Islands. This designation follows CFVI's role as NEH's interim partner since 2020, during which time the organization played a significant role in supporting humanities programming throughout the territory.

CFVI will now join the network of 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils across the U.S., tasked with bringing humanities resources, programs, and events to local communities. These councils receive general operating support from NEH and work in collaboration with the federal agency to advance public humanities initiatives.

NEH Chair Shelly C. Lowe expressed enthusiasm about CFVI's new role. "We are delighted to welcome the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands as the National Endowment for the Humanities' official partner in bringing humanities programs and experiences to Virgin Islands communities," said Lowe. She praised CFVI's extensive partnerships, strong connections across the territory, and its history of supporting education and cultural programs. "We look forward to working with CFVI in this new capacity to expand access to lifelong learning opportunities, scholarly pursuits, and educational resources."

According to the release, over the past few years, CFVI has been involved in numerous NEH-supported projects in the U.S. Virgin Islands, providing grants to fund a wide variety of humanities initiatives. These projects have included classroom activities, online educational resources, and book distribution to help teach Virgin Islands history in K-12 schools. Additionally, CFVI grants have supported the creation of a documentary on the Fireburn, the 1878 labor revolt on St. Croix, as well as efforts to map 19th-century windmills used in the sugar industry. The foundation has also worked to preserve museum archives at the St. Thomas Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in continuous use under the American flag.

CFVI is also known for promoting literacy and reading through its support of the Virgin Islands Book Festival. In 2022, the Library of Congress invited CFVI to host the Library of Congress Center for the Book for the U.S. Virgin Islands, further enhancing its involvement in local literacy programs and literary heritage initiatives.

One of CFVI's current projects, as part of NEH's United We Stand: Connecting Through Culture initiative, is a partnership between American Ancestors and the Caribbean Genealogy Library. This initiative aims to create a history curriculum that incorporates genealogy research to help students connect personally with Virgin Islands history. The project is also linked to the 10 Million Names initiative, which seeks to identify individuals of African descent who were enslaved in the areas that became the United States.

CFVI President Dee Baecher-Brown expressed pride in the new designation and emphasized the foundation's commitment to the territory's cultural heritage. "It is a tremendous honor for the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands to have been designated to serve as the Humanities Council for the U.S. Virgin Islands," Baecher-Brown said. She noted that the recognition aligns with CFVI's mission to enhance the quality of life for Virgin Islanders by supporting humanities, education, and community development. "We are excited to leverage this partnership to further empower our local organizations and ensure that the unique stories and traditions of our islands are celebrated and shared for generations to come," she added.

The NEH allocates roughly 40 percent of its annual appropriated program funds to support state and jurisdictional humanities councils like CFVI. These independent nonprofit organizations, governed by volunteer boards and staffed by humanities professionals, play a vital role in advancing public engagement with the humanities. Through local grantmaking and partnerships, these councils bring valuable resources and programming to communities across the nation.