



December 7, 2018

Wisconsin Humanities Council
3801 Regent St.
Madison, WI 53705

Grants Review Board Members:

On behalf of the Arts Board, I am writing in support of La Crosse Reads' grant application. There has been a lot of interest in and support for La Crosse Reads since its inception in 2016. The City has participated through the Arts Board, and with the help of its Planning Department and Public Library. Further support has come from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, the Peoples Food Co-op, Western Technical College, Viterbo University, Downtown Mainstreet, Inc., the Ho-Chunk Nation Three Rivers House and Cia Siab, Inc., among many others. Local businesses and organizations have welcomed numerous events organized around past books, including lectures, book clubs, and visual and performing arts. La Crosse Reads has distributed hundreds of books to community members eager to be involved in the community discussion. Those books can be returned at designated collection points and recirculated in the community to increase its impact.

This year's event continues providing engaging humanities content for our community. With *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir* by Kao Kalia Yang, the La Crosse community will gain a valuable perspective on Hmong-American experience in the upper Midwest. Hmong-Americans are one of the largest minority groups in La Crosse, which is nearly 90% white according to the U.S. Census. While there are Hmong restaurants and cultural centers, events around this book have the potential to bring about more personal cross-cultural exchange, and to tell the untold stories of a historically marginalized community. Exciting programming, including nationally-recognized speakers (Kevin Yang and Mai Der Vang) and an inclusive Community Conversation, will engage hundreds of our city's readers.

La Crosse Reads has demonstrated its ability to carry out these events successfully. Organizers and a committed steering committee have developed programming for a community read each year for the past two years. Over 2000 residents of La Crosse have attended programming or participated in these events since 2016. The Arts Board feels that this event is crucial to our city's ongoing commitment to the intersections of art and social justice advocacy.

Thank you for your consideration,

Douglas Weidenbach, Chairperson
City of La Crosse Arts Board

JASON GILMAN, AICP, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
TIM ACKLIN, AICP, SENIOR PLANNER
LEWIS KUHLMAN, AICP, ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER
ANDREA SCHNICK, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNER
ASHLEY MARSHALL, CLERK STENO III

CAROLINE GREGERSON, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR
DAWN REINHART, NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE
TARA FITZGERALD, PROGRAM COORDINATOR
KEVIN CLEMENTS, HOUSING SPECIALIST
KEVIN CONROY, HOUSING REHABILITATION SPECIALIST