



2020 Support Grants Guidelines

2020 Support grants will fund organizations that do two key things: 1) most of their work involves supporting communities that are the most marginalized in our society; and 2) they provide ongoing opportunities and skills for people in those communities to do humanities work, such as explore their culture or values, look at their individual experiences or community stories in a larger context, learn English and the knowledge they need to become citizens, or have conversations about the big questions facing our world, including those that inform their lives and the challenges in their communities.

Through FY2020 funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Mass Humanities offers a grant to support operating costs for eligible organizations with annual operating expenses below \$3 million. Priority will be given to organizations with budgets under \$300,000, but larger organizations are also encouraged to apply. The application opens on July 22 and closes August 10, 2020. Notification will begin on Sept. 15. Funds must be spent by June 15, 2021, and a final report is due on Sept. 1, 2021.

Amount of funding

Applicants should request grants of \$5,000. Actual grant amounts may vary and will be determined by the money available and the number of organizations recommended for funding. Funding for this grant is competitive but all recommended organizations will receive the same amount of funding.

Who is NOT eligible to apply?

- Individuals
- Government agencies or entities
- Universities, colleges, and academic departments
- Libraries
- Schools and pre-schools
- Political or advocacy organizations
- Religious organizations, though they may serve as a fiscal sponsor
- Organizations with annual operating expenses in FY2019 greater than \$3 million.

What types of organizations are eligible?

Massachusetts-based state or federally recognized tribes.

Nonprofit organizations located in Massachusetts that primarily work with Massachusetts residents and that were formed no later than Jan. 1, 2019.

- Nonprofit organizations must either have 501(c)3 status or have a signed fiscal sponsorship agreement with a 501(c)3 organization at the time they apply.
- Eligible organizations must have had annual cash expenses in fiscal year 2019 of at least \$10,000.
- To be eligible, organizations must comply with state and federal regulations which bar discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, age, or sexual orientation, and which require accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Organizations that received Mass Humanities CARES Act funds are eligible.

To be eligible for funding an organization must first show that it **primarily serves** one or more **marginalized communities** and that it provides that community with **ongoing programming** that does **humanities work or foundational humanities work**.

What does “marginalized communities” refer to?

Marginalized communities may include indigenous communities, communities of color, communities in poverty, low-income communities, the LGBTQ+ community, immigrants and refugees, homeless people, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons, those with disabilities, and those suffering from addiction or mental illness. The application will ask you to describe the community you serve.

Priority will be given to organizations that involve the community they serve in the creation, implementation, or oversight of their programs.

What does it mean to “primarily serve” one or more marginalized communities?

“Primarily serves” means that supporting one or more marginalized communities is at the core of your organization's mission and that members of that community make up the majority or more of the participants in your humanities programs. An organization may have programs or events for other audiences or the general public but the majority or more of its time and resources go to one or more marginalized communities. Organization mission statements, community demographics, and program participant demographics can demonstrate the degree to which your organization serves a marginalized community.

What does “ongoing programming” refer to?

At least some of an organization's programs should provide many opportunities, over the course of a year or several months, for people in the communities it serves to take part in conversation,

education, or other activities that engage the humanities. Such programming is part of the organization's calendar year after year and will continue in some form in 2020 and 2021.

For instance, a social service agency offering regular ESOL classes to immigrants and refugees as one of its many services would be eligible, but a YMCA that has offered a humanities-based book club twice in the past five years but otherwise offers art and exercise classes would not be eligible.

The application will ask for a description of past programs.

What do we mean by the humanities and by foundational work in the humanities?

The National Endowment for the Humanities explains that the humanities engage people in activities like making sense of their experiences, passing down cultural traditions, sharing their stories, asking big questions about their values, and learning about civics. Humanities programs can help us draw wisdom from the past, understand the present, and think about the kind of world we want to create.

Foundational work in the humanities helps people to develop the knowledge and skills to be able to engage with the humanities more fully. It includes things like storytime for children, literacy and ESOL classes for English-language learners, citizenship classes that teach students what they need to know about our democracy to pass the citizenship test, and work with youth that helps them to explore their values and better understand the world around them.

The application will ask you to explain if your program involves these kinds of activities. You can read more [here](#).

What are some examples of ongoing humanities programming?

- Community storytelling and conversation
- Programs that pass down culture and traditions
- Community conversations about values, identity, and big questions about the world we live in
- Education or conversation about books, theater, music, art, media, or history
- Education or conversation about community issues and government
- Education about citizenship and democracy
- Literacy education for adults
- Any of the above as an essential and deep part of creating some other kind of event like a play, festival, art project, or youth activity

What are some examples of programming that would NOT be considered as humanities programming for the purposes of this grant?

- Art or handwork classes, unless the main purpose was to pass down knowledge about a community's cultural traditions
- STEM or STEAM classes
- Exercise or sports classes
- Financial management classes
- Leadership classes that do not explore participants' values, identities, and the complexities of their worlds
- Community service programs that do not involve participants in significant conversation to help them explore the meaning of their work in the community

- Programs on how to achieve academic success and get into college
- Tutoring and homework help programs
- Media literacy classes focused mainly on teaching technical skills like videography, how to create a website, or how to create a blog
- Healing work or the treatment of trauma, mental illness, or addiction
- Work in nature (farming classes, clearing trails, hiking, etc.) that does not emphasize exploring our relationship to the natural world
- Art, theater, or music programs that do not emphasize humanities explorations or conversations as part of the creation or the interpretation of art

Review Criteria:

Mass Humanities will evaluate applications based on:

- The challenges faced by the community an organization supports.
- The degree to which an organization's humanities programs engage that community. Priority will be given to organizations that involve the community they serve in the creation, implementation, or oversight of their programs.
- The degree to which an organization's programs engage the humanities.
- The size of the organization. Priority will be given to organizations with operating expenses under \$300,000.
- Regional diversity among funded organizations.

Review and Notification:

Mass Humanities staff and a committee of the Mass Humanities Board of Directors will review and approve applications. Staff will notify applicants on Sept. 15, 2020.

Use of Funds:

Funds are to be used only for operating expenses, which can include expenses for programming.

Funds may NOT be used for any of the following:

- Promotion of a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view
- Advocacy of a particular program of social or political action
- Support for specific public policies or legislation
- Lobbying
- Purchase of land or facilities, or the cost of construction or renovation
- Debt or deficit reduction
- Endowment of capital campaigns
- For research or feasibility studies

Reporting:

Mass Humanities requires grantees to complete a brief final report no later than September 1, 2021 listing how the grant funds were expended and the impact of those funds on constituents.

How to Apply:

If your organization is a 501(c)3 and you have applied for a Mass Humanities grant on its behalf in the past, log in to the system and start the application.

If you or your organization is new to Mass Humanities, you will need to create an account. To create an account you will need to know your organization's address and tax-ID number.

If your organization has applied to Mass Humanities in the past using a fiscal sponsor, please reach out to grants@masshumanities.org to assist you in updating your account information.

Log in to the application system [here](#).