



# BY AND FOR THE PEOPLE

STRATEGIC &  
OPERATIONAL  
PLAN



.....  
2021–2024

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mass Humanities launched its strategic planning process in late 2019. Following a successful leadership transition, the board of directors and staff sought to respond to the diverse needs and experiences of its stakeholders: the individuals and organizations who support a thriving public humanities field in Massachusetts. Our journey began with an emphasis on listening. We embraced the opportunity to understand the changes affecting communities across the commonwealth.

The year 2020, however, provided more change than any of us bargained for. Our strategic planning process unfolded against the backdrop of a global pandemic, a rising movement for racial justice, and deepening political polarization. In our daily work, Mass Humanities met these challenges through an unprecedented increase in our grant making, the development of public programs and grants that addressed threats to our democracy, and a digital pivot to sustain our operations and partnerships. These efforts continue to evolve as residents of Massachusetts persevere through cascading crises.

The experiences of 2020 fundamentally shaped the 2021-24 Strategic Plan. The next three years will be a time of rebuilding for our society. The humanities must play a central role in the response to the disasters that unfolded in 2020. With our emphases on equity, civic engagement, and digital capacity, the organization sets forth with clear intentions, aware that more challenges will arise as the nation confronts its complicated past and perilous present. At this pivotal point in the evolution of our democracy, we believe the humanities, created by and for the people, can lay the groundwork for a better future.



### OUR MISSION

We create opportunities for people to transform their lives and build a more equitable Commonwealth through the humanities.

### THE HUMANITIES

The humanities are the cornerstones of our democracy, the tools by which we comprehend the past, forge new ideas, and express ourselves as participants in a free society.

## OUR CORE VALUES

We believe:

- ▶ the humanities include those studies and interpretive practices that illuminate **our deepest concerns** and reflect **our individual and collective aspirations**.
- ▶ the humanities offer us tools for **making sense of our lives** and making our way through the collective life we share.
- ▶ the people of Massachusetts can thrive only when the humanities are **accessible to all residents**.
- ▶ in promoting **an equitable and inclusive society** that recognizes all people's perspectives, especially those who have been marginalized and underrepresented.
- ▶ the humanities must be part of **decision-making at every level**, from the street corner to the classroom to the town meeting and the state house.
- ▶ in **opening routes of engagement** and doing so with integrity and accountability.
- ▶ in being innovative, responsive **co-creators and partners**.



## OUR GOALS

**Catalyze civic engagement.** Advance the use of the humanities as essential tools for addressing the challenges faced by Massachusetts residents in order to create a more equitable and inclusive society.

**Elevate community leadership.** Transform the leadership of the public humanities field in Massachusetts to reflect the backgrounds and aspirations of our communities.

**Expand the stories of Massachusetts.** Collaborate with the residents of Massachusetts to access, illuminate and expand understanding of the ideas and stories that shape the Commonwealth.

**Inspire community investment.** Increase the resources available for the humanities from the public and private sectors to develop innovative ideas, implement responsive programs, and expand the audiences for the humanities.



## KEY INITIATIVES



### THE CLEMENTE COURSE IN THE HUMANITIES

## ELEVATE NEW VOICES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

#### Mass Humanities will:

- ▶ Advance the Clemente Course by creating opportunities for students and graduates to engage digitally.
- ▶ Create opportunities for students to participate in humanities-based programs and skill building that amplifies their voices in their communities.

#### Year 1

- ▶ Staff program with 50% of program officer position to support traditional and bridge courses.
- ▶ Secure a partner to conduct an assessment of five host sites for growth potential and challenges for civic engagement, retention, and curricula.
- ▶ Host “bridge courses” for graduates that produce print and online publications.
- ▶ Host 1-2 local legislator events to connect Clemente students to civic officials.

#### Year 2

- ▶ Implement opportunities that respond to student feedback via “bridge courses” for graduates, outreach to local organizations.
- ▶ Produce print and online publication.
- ▶ Host 1-2 local legislator events to connect Clemente students to civic officials.
- ▶ Conduct assessment.
- ▶ Create new grant opportunity for local organizations to partner with Clemente on projects, public events.

#### Year 3

- ▶ Produce “bridge courses” for graduates to produce print and online publication.
- ▶ Host 1-2 local legislator events to connect Clemente students to civic officials.
- ▶ Provide grants to local organizations to partner with Clemente students on projects, public events.
- ▶ Establish Director of Clemente position.

#### Three-year outputs:

- ▶ Support 500 low-income adults through traditional Clemente courses and bridge writing courses.
- ▶ Publish annual collections of student writing (3).
- ▶ Award minimum of 5 grants to local orgs to partner with Clemente on public programs.
- ▶ Connect Clemente sites to legislators.
- ▶ Establish Clemente with director position.



## KEY INITIATIVES



### GRANTS

## A MORE VIBRANT STORY OF MASSACHUSETTS

#### Mass Humanities will:

- ▶ Prioritize grant funding for projects that surface new narratives about the past, present, and future of Massachusetts, with an emphasis on the voices and experiences of historically marginalized communities.
- ▶ Establish and fund a network of past and current grantees with experience in storytelling and story sharing to share best practices, identify challenges, and incubate new grant making opportunities.
- ▶ Develop content platforms and media partnerships to share with the public and civic leaders the stories generated through funded projects.



#### Year 1

- ▶ Launch new grant opportunity to support projects that collect, interpret and disseminate new narratives about Massachusetts. (\$300,000 total).
- ▶ Convene and fund learning network of grantees with relevant experience to identify best practices and needs of the field to shape funding opportunities for year 2.
- ▶ Staff professional development.

#### Year 2

- ▶ Coordinate second learning network.
- ▶ Establish partnership to evaluate the grants process and funded projects under this initiative.
- ▶ Establish translation partnerships for storytelling grantees.

#### Year 3

- ▶ Provide additional funding, training for storytelling projects.
- ▶ Convene public event to celebrate funded projects.
- ▶ Coordinate third learning network.

#### Three-year outputs:

- ▶ Establishment of grantee cohorts to shape funding opportunities.
- ▶ Complete assessment of MH grant-making.
- ▶ Issue major grants to 25 organizations per year (w/MCC funds) to generate new narratives about Massachusetts.

## KEY INITIATIVES



### READING FREDERICK DOUGLASS TOGETHER

## DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS AND A DIGITAL PLATFORM TO BRING THE WORDS OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS TO MASSACHUSETTS AND THE NATION

#### Mass Humanities will:

- ▶ Engage the wisdom and expertise of our Reading Frederick Douglass Together partners to develop a digital platform that centralizes resources for facilitated discussions, innovative events, and multilingual readings.
- ▶ Document and increase recognition of the shared reading tradition.
- ▶ Generate more events in Massachusetts and around the nation.

#### Year 1

- ▶ Convene RFDT project directors to identify needs and best practices in shared readings and discussions.
- ▶ Enter into partnership agreements with sites to maintain consistency, position these partners to serve as teachers to new sites, and contributors for digital resources.
- ▶ Establish our goals for the website.

#### Year 2

- ▶ Establish partnership or fellowship to research the history of shared readings of "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?"
- ▶ Begin plans for website.
- ▶ Connect partner sites with other MH discussion and translation initiatives.

#### Year 3

- ▶ Build ReadingFrederickDouglassTogether.org, featuring new digital resources for readings and discussions, scholarship on shared reading tradition, and toolkits for hosting events.
- ▶ Conduct national outreach for site launch.

#### Three-year outputs:

- ▶ 55 funded events.
- ▶ New website to serve as national resource for readings.
- ▶ Published history of the tradition of Douglass readings.



## KEY INITIATIVES



### SMITHSONIAN MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET TOUR

## PARTNER WITH THE SMITHSONIAN TO SPARK BIG CONVERSATIONS IN SMALL TOWNS

#### Mass Humanities will:

- ▶ Provide grant opportunities that seed, nurture and sustain partnerships at the local level between organizations seeking to use the humanities to facilitate dialogue that identifies and addresses community needs.
- ▶ Develop the internal staff capacity of Mass Humanities to train organizations in facilitating humanities-based discussions.

#### Year 1

- ▶ Leverage the 2022-23 Smithsonian Museum on Main Street (MoMs) traveling exhibition to pilot this strategy.
- ▶ Award grants to 6 local institutions to serve as host sites for the traveling exhibit on rural America.
- ▶ Identify a partner to lead facilitation workshops with 1) MH staff and 2) the six selected host sites.
- ▶ Host initial workshop with 6 grantees, Smithsonian, discussion facilitation training.
- ▶ Partner with the host sites to identify local partners to co-host minimum of 1 discussion program per site for the six-week exhibition stop.



#### Year 2

- ▶ Coordinate and evaluate Smithsonian tour and fund additional partnerships.
- ▶ Host second training with Smithsonian.
- ▶ Promote exhibit and tour events through media partnership.
- ▶ Convene grantees to identify needs and lessons learned.
- ▶ Plan new grant line for organizations seeking to partner for community building, discussions.

#### Year 3

- ▶ Complete tour by establishing Mass Humanities' ability to lead trainings on facilitating discussions and provide grants to sustain partnerships for additional civic discussions in each region.
- ▶ Provide \$10,000 grants to six local partnerships.
- ▶ Launch new partnership grant line.
- ▶ Produce final document (publication or digital media) on the traveling exhibition.
- ▶ Begin planning for 2025-26 exhibition on American democracy.

#### Three-year outputs:

- ▶ Statewide traveling exhibition reaches 6 cities, produces 30+ public events.
- ▶ Development of 6 partnerships at regional level for civic dialogue.
- ▶ 1 publication/other content reflecting success, participation in tour.
- ▶ Mass Humanities achieves capacity to train discussion leaders.

## KEY INITIATIVES



### PUBLIC OUTREACH

## A CHAMPION FOR THE HUMANITIES

Mass Humanities will develop original content that our grantees generate, elevate it through media partnerships, and use it to foster and enhance civic engagement. This robust outreach strategy will culminate in 2024 with a 50th Anniversary Humanities Festival that celebrates the humanities by and for the people.

### 1. Produce authentic, inclusive stories about Massachusetts

#### Mass Humanities will:

- ▶ Create a new brand and donor engagement strategy for Mass Humanities as the go-to organization for engaging with the stories of Massachusetts.
- ▶ Develop media partnerships, online programs, and the production of original content
- ▶ Build capacity to harness, package and distribute the stories generated through grants and programs.

#### Year 1

- ▶ Hire Media Director to coordinate all aspects of this strategy.
- ▶ Seek media partnership that presents stories and events of MH grantees to wider audience.
- ▶ Create publishing partnership to ensure consistency, quality and distribution of the Clemente publications in print and online.
- ▶ Continue to build online programs focused on audience engagement, with special opportunities for donors.

#### Year 2

- ▶ Hire firm to rebrand the organization with emphasis on new orientation toward civic engagement, storytelling, discussion.
- ▶ Relaunch website with more digital media capacity.
- ▶ Generate content (online features, short films) from Smithsonian tour for use in media partnership, legislative outreach.

#### Year 3

- ▶ Launch media partnerships to promote #MH50.
- ▶ Continue to generate content from grantees for website, additional media partnerships.
- ▶ Begin planning media strategy for 2025 Smithsonian exhibition.

#### Three-year outputs:

- ▶ Organizational rebrand.
- ▶ Relaunch website and/or MassMoments for grantee-produced content and stories.
- ▶ Sustained media partnerships to promote programs and events.
- ▶ Media Director position.



## KEY INITIATIVES



### PUBLIC OUTREACH

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## 2. Identify champions for the humanities

### Mass Humanities will:

- ▶ Engage legislators and other elected officials in conversations and convenings with grantees to increase recognition of the humanities as resources in decision making at the local level.

### Year 1

- ▶ Partner with MCC and MASSCreative to identify best practices, target issues, and opportunities for collaboration.
- ▶ Identify legislative allies and plan 1-2 regional events.
- ▶ Host grantee event at State House with Smithsonian host site grantees.

### Year 2

- ▶ Host annual grantee event at State House.
- ▶ Public guide to humanities activities in state for legislators, organizing funded projects by relevant themes (e.g. immigration, rural life, civil rights).
- ▶ Incorporate legislative outreach into planning for Governor's Awards.
- ▶ Host 1-2 regional events.

### Year 3

- ▶ Host annual grantee event at State House.
- ▶ Public guide to humanities activities in state for legislators.
- ▶ Incorporate legislative outreach into planning for Governor's Awards.
- ▶ Host 1-2 regional events.

### Three-year outputs:

- ▶ Annual State House events – 3
- ▶ Regional events for legislators – 6
- ▶ Humanities guide for legislators – 2



## KEY INITIATIVES



### PUBLIC OUTREACH

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### 3. #MH50: A Humanities Festival

#### Mass Humanities will:

- ▶ Celebrate the 50th with a humanities festival in western MA.
- ▶ Elevate the community-based humanities projects and organizations supported by MH in 2021-2024 three years of changing the face of the humanities, presenting people working on the local level in Massachusetts.
- ▶ Produce a 50th anniversary report for use in fundraising.

#### Year 1

- ▶ Research comparable events.
- ▶ Create planning committee.



#### Year 2

- ▶ Confirm date, location and major partners.
- ▶ Establish fellowship or partnership to organize MH archives.
- ▶ Plan production of 50-year report.

#### Year 3

- ▶ Host event in summer 2024.
- ▶ Produce 50th year report featuring history of org, overview of impact.
- ▶ Analyze the results of the event as a framework for a bi-annual festival.

#### Three-year outputs:

- ▶ Publish history of organization.
- ▶ Organize and preserve organizational archives.
- ▶ Hold 1-day celebration showcasing MH grantees as pilot for future humanities festival.



## MASS HUMANITIES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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