



Promises of the Revolution an Expand Massachusetts Stories grant

Expand Massachusetts Stories (EMS) is a grant program for projects that collect, interpret and/or share narratives about the Commonwealth, with an emphasis on the voices and experiences that have gone unrecognized, or have been excluded from public conversation.

“Promises of the Revolution” will offer up to \$20,000 for projects that respond to the theme of “Promises of the Revolution.”

Theme: As Massachusetts prepares for the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, Mass Humanities seeks projects that explore how Massachusetts people, from the distant past to the present, fought for the core promises of the Declaration of Independence: equality for all; the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and the belief that the power of any government rests on the consent of the people. Projects are encouraged to explore and amplify previously unacknowledged voices from the past; make space for the lived experiences of Massachusetts residents from historically excluded communities; reconsider well-known stories from new perspectives; and create spaces for deep discussion of the meaning of these ideas for communities today. Mass Humanities believes such voices and stories hold the power to illuminate, question, and renovate our understanding of the Revolution as both history and inspiration.

Read more from Mass Humanities Executive Director [HERE](#)

Key Dates (2025):

Letter of Inquiry Deadline	June 9
Applicants notified of LOI status; Application opens	July 7
Full Proposal deadline	September 2
Awards made and applicants notified by	October 31
Grant Period Begins	November 1

How to reach out with questions

You can reach a Mass Humanities Program Officer at grants@masshumanities.org. We will do our best to respond to your question.

Sample projects and topics

- Re-examinations of well-known stories of the American Revolution from new perspectives.
- Oral histories by immigrant communities seeking freedom from oppression or living through revolutionary change in their home countries.
- Programs exploring independence movements inspired by, or responding to, American Independence.
- Exhibits or programs sharing stories of Indigenous self-determination and cultural reclamation.
- Facilitated discussions about what the anniversary of the American Revolution means to a community, using texts from the revolutionary era and today, focused on untold stories or previously excluded communities.
- Community-based exhibits focused on the meaning of freedom for Massachusetts communities.
- Short documentary film (15-30 minutes) exploring how artists or musicians have inspired, or responded to, movements for equal rights.
- K-12 curricula exploring under-recognized communities' roles in the American Revolution through their work, labor, and material culture.
- Podcasts exploring people or communities in Massachusetts seeking equal rights and dignity.

Grant Amount: Applicants may request up to \$20,000 in project funds. For projects awarded grants, Mass Humanities will award requests in full. *We welcome applications for smaller amounts and are committed to funding projects across a range of sizes and requests.*

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APPLICATION PROCESS

“Promises of the Revolution” has a two-step application process:

Letter of Inquiry (LOI) due June 9: Applicants will fill out and submit an LOI.

- Program staff will review LOI’s and invite a subset of 25-30 applicants to proceed to a full proposal.
- Program staff will also select up to an additional 15 applicants to participate in a project development cohort. *See Advancing Equity below.*

Full Proposal due September 2: Applicants with an approved LOI will proceed to draft and submit a full proposal. Mass Humanities board members and/or advisors will review these proposals to select awardees.

Submission details

Both the LOI and the final application are accessible via the Mass Humanities grant portal.

LOI -You will be asked for:

- A project title and brief statement
- Project timing
- How the project fits the Expand Massachusetts Stories initiative and theme
- A narrative of your project plans
- Grant amount requested and approximate costs
- Project personnel names and roles

Full Proposal -If invited, you will be asked to provide:

- A detailed project narrative
- Work Plan and Timeline
- Event List
- Budget details, with at least 10% cash match contribution, up to 90% in-kind contribution
- Outreach and publicity plan
- Project team bios or resumes
- Humanities advisor letter

ADVANCING EQUITY COHORT

What is it?

The Advancing Equity Cohort offers an early guarantee of funding, and 1-on-1 project development support, for a select group of up to 15 applicants who demonstrate interest and need.

Why?

Projects that surface or share people's stories, especially stories of historically excluded communities, take time and care to prepare. For small organizations, and projects led by people from under-resourced communities, the time it takes to prepare a project and application is a significant investment. Through the cohort, Mass Humanities will honor that investment in time with project and application development support and a commitment to fund projects that meet Mass Humanities criteria.

What are the benefits and requirements?

Mass Humanities will invite a select number of Promises of the Revolution applicants to:

- Develop and submit final applications that are non-competitively reviewed and approved.
- Meet one on one with a Mass Humanities Program Officer for support on your project design (i.e., assembling a project team, budget planning, finding humanities advisors, meeting application criteria)
- Attend virtual workshops as a cohort and receive group feedback
- Receive outreach/P.R. support for activities that take place as part of 250th commemorations in MA
- Matching requirement waived

How to apply for this cohort:

You can 'opt in' for consideration at the Letter of Inquiry stage by checking yes/no to a question and explaining your interest in the cohort. If you are not selected for the cohort, your LOI will still be considered for the overall grant opportunity.

How will projects be selected into the cohort?

LOIs will be reviewed for acceptance into the cohort by Mass Humanities Program Officers, based on a combination of available spaces, potential to benefit from the cohort, variety of project types, and community and geographic balance.

Timeline: Cohort engagement and support take place between mid-July to mid-October, with final proposals due mid-October.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicant Eligibility

Applicant organizations must:

- Be a 501(c)(3), non-profit, fiscally-sponsored association or filmmaker (see below), state or federally recognized tribe, or non-federal government organization.
- Serve Massachusetts residents.
- Be in compliance 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. Specifically:
[The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 \(ADA\)](#)
[Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 \(Section 504\)](#)
[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)
[Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972](#)
[The Age Discrimination Act of 1975](#)

Fiscal sponsorship: Ad-hoc groups, filmmakers, and non-profit organizations without 501(c)(3) status must find an eligible 501(c)(3) organization to be their fiscal sponsor. Fiscal sponsors manage the grant funds and are identified in the application. They must also provide a signed fiscal sponsor agreement for upload in the online application. The application provides links to sample agreements and additional resources.

Mass Humanities does **not** award funding to individuals.

For returning grantees: Past grant recipients need to have completed any past Mass Humanities grant projects and submitted their final reports one week before their final application is due for a new grant application.

There are two exceptions to this rule:

- Organizations can have open 2025 Reading Frederick Douglass Together grants.
- Organizations can be fiscal sponsors on more than one Mass Humanities grant at a time.

Project Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, proposed projects need to:

- Respond to the theme of Promises of the Revolution
- Have the goal of making narratives of Massachusetts accessible to Massachusetts residents at minimal cost to participants.
- Have a clear objective and completion date.
- Use the tools of the humanities—inquiry, contextualization, and/or reflection.
- Be supported by a humanities advisor.

- Primarily serve public audiences outside of 4-year college faculty and students.

Special Project Expectations

Film projects, oral history or story collection projects, and projects related to Native American and Indigenous communities have additional requirements. See the Film Requirements, Oral History and Story Collecting Requirements, and the Code of Ethics for Projects Related to Native Americans in the Appendix.

What Expand Massachusetts Stories Grants Cannot Fund:

- Work undertaken or supplies purchased before or after the grant period
- Projects primarily focused on the creation of art or artistic performances
- Professional theater productions
- Direct social service, e.g., counseling, therapeutic, legal, or medical services
- Capital improvements, construction, or restoration
- Lobbying or advocacy projects for specific public policies or legislation
- The promotion of a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view
- Scholarships or prizes
- Production of full-length (longer than 40 minutes) documentary films
- Profit-making or fundraising projects; capital campaigns, or organizational strategic planning
- Re-grants to other organizations
- Tickets costs if the revenue from ticket sales goes to the applicant organization
- Costs of entertainment or alcohol
- General operating costs (outside of 10% indirect project costs)

Humanities Focus

Projects should use the tools of the humanities—inquiry, contextualization, and reflection—to improve our shared understanding of Massachusetts’ peoples and places.

The humanities help us explore who we are as individuals, as members of a society, and as inheritors of the past. According to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the humanities include the following fields of learning: literature, language, history, philosophy, archeology, comparative religion, law, ethics, interpretation of the arts, and social sciences that use humanities methods. Of course, new humanities fields and topics emerge all the time. Many go by different names. What they share is a method that values inquiry into individual and shared experience, connection to others’ ideas and experiences, and reflection and interpretation.

What is a Humanities Advisor?

A Humanities advisor contributes to a project with their deep knowledge of humanities subjects or methods. They are recognized by their peers for their expertise, or by a community as a bearer of its knowledge and traditions. For example, a humanities advisor can be someone who has earned an advanced humanities degree from a university, or a humanities advisor can be a tribal elder and

educator. Some humanities advisors may have knowledge of a subject matter relevant to the proposed program. Some may be experts in a kind of humanities inquiry or method. Projects can have multiple humanities advisors on their team, but at least one advisor will provide a resume and statement explaining how their humanities knowledge will inform the proposed program.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PROJECT BUDGETS

Mass Humanities funds can cover many types of project costs, from research hours, to exhibit design, to printing, publicity and more. On our budget forms, you explain the costs of the project during the grant period, how much of those costs you are asking Mass Humanities to cover, and how you plan to cover the rest of them.

Expense Limits

Mass Humanities limits spending Mass Humanities funds on certain kinds of project costs:

- Speaker Stipends/Honoraria: We fund up to \$500 per speaker, per event.
- Reusable Equipment: We fund up to \$1,000 for the purchase of reusable equipment needed for the project. Equipment cost requests should be kept to a reasonable percentage of the total Mass Humanities funds requested.
- Receptions: We fund food costs for receptions up to \$300 per project.
- Food: Reasonable food costs for program participants (such as lunch at a teacher's institute or food for youth in an after-school program) are allowed.
- Lodging: We fund lodging up to \$250 per person, per day.
- Travel: Reasonable travel costs for project personnel, such as out-of-town speakers, are allowed. Mass Humanities rarely funds international travel (originating outside of Canada, Mexico, the U.S., and U.S. territories and possessions).

Matching Requirements

Mass Humanities funding can only cover up to half of your total project costs. The rest must come from other sources, which can include your organization's operating budget. These costs covered by other sources are called your "cost share." There are two different kinds of cost-shares, depending on how the support is given:

- **Cash-share**: Cash-share support is when actual money changes hands — when your organization pays for things like work, supplies, external venue rentals, travel costs or fees. The cash can come from your organization's operating budget, from ticket sales or registration fees, and from other grants and donations.
- **In-kind-share**: In-kind support is a cash-less donation. It includes things like free use of facilities, supplies donated to the project, and volunteered time. In your budget, you'll be asked to determine the cash-value of these donations. For example, in Massachusetts, volunteer time is valued at approximately \$30/hour.

Matching Requirement: Applicant organizations must at least equally match the amount of funding requested of Mass Humanities, through a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. This is

often called a “one-to-one match.” It helps you show who else (including your organization) is making a financial commitment or volunteer contribution to the project.

Cash Match Requirement: At least 10% of your matching funds must be a cash-share. The rest can be in-kind contributions.

Example: Imagine the total cost of your project is \$30,000. You request \$15,000 from Mass Humanities. You match that request with \$1500 in cash from a community foundation grant and \$13,500 in volunteer hours and services, or \$15,000 total. Your match (\$15,000) equals the amount you requested of Mass Humanities (\$15,000).

Indirect Costs

Mass Humanities funds may be used to cover a portion of your indirect costs. Indirect costs are often called “overhead” or “operating costs.” They don’t go directly to the project, but they are necessary to do things like keep the lights on while staff works, manage financial transactions, and cover insurance.

Calculating Indirect Costs: Calculate your indirect cost request as 10% of the total direct project costs you are asking Mass Humanities to fund.

Example: Imagine you request \$4,000 for direct costs like renting a space your organization does not own, paying speakers, and printing fliers. Using a 10% rate, you calculate your indirect costs as \$400. Your total funding request (direct plus indirect) is \$4,400.

Eligibility Self-Check

Use the following checklist to help assess your eligibility.

- I am seeking funds for work that takes place after Nov. 1, 2025.
- My project plans to have deliverables by February, 2027.
- My project responds to the theme.
- My organization is a non-profit, government or recognized tribal entity, or fiscally sponsored project.
- My project is not for the purpose of advocating for specific legislation or social programs.
- My project is not for direct social services (counseling, therapy, legal advice or representation).
- My project is not primarily focused on the creation of a performance or work of art.
- My project focuses on finding or sharing under-recognized stories of Massachusetts.
- My project benefits the public, beyond 4-year college students.
- My project is free or low-cost for participants.
- My project is supported by a humanities advisor.
- I understand the matching requirement and feel confident in meeting it.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Every application is unique. When writing your application, help us envision your project by giving illustrative examples and specific details. These are the criteria we look for when reviewing projects:

Humanities Content and/or Methods: The humanities are central to this project. The proposal demonstrates sound approaches to humanities content and/or methods. The project allows for diverse perspectives among participants and/or audiences. The humanities advisor has relevant and appropriate humanities expertise for their role in the project. If applicable, additional humanities advisors have relevant and appropriate humanities expertise for their roles in the project.

Expand Massachusetts Stories: The project will surface, interpret and/or share stories of Massachusetts, particularly stories that have been unrecognized in or excluded from public conversation. The project will expand public understanding of these Massachusetts stories. The project's topic will be relevant to Massachusetts residents. The project's approach aligns with Mass Humanities' values and goals, where applicable. If applicable, the project engages communities or individuals whose stories it represents in the program's development.

Theme: The project will surface, interpret and/or share stories that reveal ways Massachusetts residents sought or seek to realize the promises of the Revolution, with an emphasis on untold or underrecognized stories. The project clearly engages residents with questions about the meaning of the promises of equality, rights, and/or consent of the governed, with an emphasis on stories that have been unrecognized in or excluded from public conversation. Participants will understand the relevance of the project to the commemoration of the American Revolution. The public will understand the relevance of the project to the commemoration of the American Revolution.

Organization and Personnel: The proposal demonstrates that the major project personnel are well-qualified for their roles. There are enough project team members to successfully complete the project. The applicant organization appears to have the capacity to successfully implement this project. The applicant organization has sufficient funds to complete the project or feasible plans to obtain sufficient funds. If applicable, key partners or collaborators have demonstrated their support for the project.

Audience and Outreach: The proposal demonstrates a clear sense of the audience that the project will engage. The topic, format, venue, and/or schedule are appropriate for engaging the audience. The outreach plan includes sufficient time for reaching participants. The outreach plan is appropriate for the intended audience. Mass Humanities will be appropriately recognized in the project publicity and deliverables.

Project Plan: The proposal presents a coherent project (i.e. it is not merely an assembly of disparate work). The project's deliverables are clearly articulated. The work activities described in the application are sufficient for achieving the project deliverables. The work activities described will be well-coordinated, with any necessary benchmarks and/or advisory points identified. The project's timeline is realistic.

Budget: The Mass Humanities-funded project costs are reasonable and justified. The project

budget is realistic in terms of the project's scale. The cost shares appear reasonable and feasible for the organization. Mass Humanities funding will make an impact on this project.

In addition to these criteria, Mass Humanities also considers regional diversity, organizational diversity and project diversity in selection.

HOW TO APPLY

All grant applications are submitted via Mass Humanities online application system. Here's how it works:

Starting your online application

If your organization already has an account in Mass Humanities online grant system, log in and make sure that all of the contact information is up to date.

If you are new to your organization and do not have the previous account login information contact grants@masshumanities.org.

If your organization is new to Mass Humanities, you will need to create an account.

Creating an Account

To create an account in the online grants system you will need to provide the following information:

- Name, address, phone number, and email address of the person responsible for managing the application. The email address you enter here is important for two reasons:
 - The email address and password you enter at this stage will become your account login. You will need them whenever you want to log in to the online grants system. Make sure you save them for future use.
 - The email address will become the primary contact for your grant application. All notifications about the progress of your application, and all information should you be awarded a grant, will be sent to this address.
- Name and IRS Tax Identification Number of the applicant organization.
 - Note: If your organization does not have a Tax Identification Number you may enter 99- 9999999. In the application, you will be asked to provide the Tax Identification Number of your fiscal sponsor. Filmmakers should apply as “[First Name] [Last Name] – Filmmaker.”
- Address and phone number of the applicant organization.

Accessing and completing application forms

Accessing the Online Application Form: When you log in to your online account, go to the “Apply” page and select the correct grant opportunity. An LOI/Application form will open. Work on answering the questions. Your responses save automatically so that you can work on the form over a few sittings. You can also click the “Save Draft” button to receive confirmation that your answers are saved. When you’re done, click the “Submit” button.

Submit LOI/Application: Make sure you’ve answered all of the questions marked with a *. Double-check any additional documents you’ve uploaded and press “Submit.” As always, leave time to troubleshoot technical glitches. Your proposal is due by 11:59pm on the proposal deadline.

Notification: All notification will come from the online grants system. Check your spam filters to make sure that you do not miss an email.

Post Award

Applicants who receive funds and become grantees will continue to use this grant portal to access and submit all grant agreements and reports.

Payment, Reporting, and Publicity

Funded projects with awards less than \$10,000 will receive 90% of their award upon submitting their grant contract. Remaining funds will be awarded upon completion of a brief final report on project outcomes and use of funds.

Funded projects with awards of \$10,000 and above will receive 45% of their award upon submitting their grant contract. Grantees can request an additional 45% of their award after completing an optional interim report. All remaining funds will be awarded upon completion of a final report on project outcomes and use of funds.

Funded projects that need to make major changes to the scope, timeline, format, key project staff, or budget changes of more than \$2,000 per-line item should submit a “change request” form in the online grants system for approval.

Funded projects will acknowledge Mass Humanities and source of funds in publicity.

SPECIAL PROJECT REQUIREMENTS - APPENDIX

Film Project Requirements

Mass Humanities supports short documentary films projects that explore humanities themes through collaborations between humanities experts and documentary filmmakers. Grant funded

projects must produce a film, in the 15-30 minute range, ready for distribution by the end of the grant period. Mass Humanities can fund all parts of the production process that adhere to our general budget rules.

Mass Humanities will not fund the production of full-length documentary films but can fund projects that supports distribution of a completed film through audience education and engagement.

Oral History and Story Collection Project Requirements

Oral history and story collection projects are eligible for Mass Humanities funding if the gathering, sharing, and gaining insight into a community's story is central to the project.

Projects whose primary aim is training individuals in storytelling performance are not eligible for Expand Massachusetts Stories grants.

All oral history or story collection project proposals should demonstrate that the project meets the following conditions:

- A specific group of subjects and a strategy for getting them interviewed.
- The involvement of an oral interview specialist. This person may be the humanities advisor, or the project may have both an interview specialist and a humanities advisor who brings other necessary knowledge to the project.
- An interpretive/editorial deliverable that intentionally shares samples of the interviews. For example, an exhibit, public presentation, program, or website/page.
- Training for interviewers that includes interview technique and equipment use, ethical responsibilities, and education about the topic or community that is the focus of the project.
- Technology: Use digital technology only. For advice, visit the Oral History Association's website. Video is permissible but best practices recommend an audio recording be made simultaneously for back-up and transcription.
- A plan for storing and making interviews publicly accessible. Projects that plan to store interviews in a public archive should conform with standards of technology, privacy, and historical scholarship such as described in the Principles and Best Practices of the Oral History Association. Be specific about equipment, plans, and commitments.
- Recorded interviews must be accompanied by a legal release. There is no standard form.
- Projects that involve teaching must have commitments from teacher(s) and school, as well as indicate how the project is aligned with the MA Curriculum Standards.

Requirements for Projects Related to Native American and Indigenous Communities

National Endowment for the Humanities Code of Ethics Related to Native Americans

Mass Humanities award recipients have the responsibility of ensuring that researchers and scholars working on projects related to Native Americans, Aleut, Eskimo, or Native Hawaiian peoples adhere to the following provisions:

Every effort should be made in advance of project design and execution to engage the agreement, advice, and cooperation of members of the Native community in planning and execution of the project and in the disposition and results from the project. This should be communicated to the Native community and the anticipated consequences and results of the research or data-gathering should be explained as fully as possible to the individuals and groups likely to be affected. Where research or exhibition of materials involves the acquisition of material (objects and documents) and transfer of information on the assumption of trust between persons, the rights, expressed interests and sensitivities of those originating the material must be safeguarded. There is an obligation on the part of the scholar/ researcher/principal investigator to reflect on the foreseeable repercussions of research and publication on the participant population and to inform them of the probable impact.

Native community consultants have the right to remain anonymous or be specifically named and given credit if they so choose. This right should be respected where it has been explicitly promised. Where there is no clear understanding to the contrary, sources should be kept confidential. Because funded proposals, grant reports and other written material in the Endowment's possession are available to the public, no identifications contrary to the wishes of the community consultants should appear.

Investigators using recording devices such as cameras or tape recorders or the technique of oral interviewing are also subject to the above criteria. Subjects under study should understand the capacities of such machines and should be free to accept or reject their use. Individuals or group community consultants should be fairly compensated (through reciprocal exchange or monetary payment) for their services/ information and there may be no exploitation of subjects under study. Scholars should make every attempt to guarantee appropriate credit (in the form of co- authorship or co-investigatorship) and the distribution of financial rewards where appropriate for products resulting from projects.

Any report or work considered for publication (and where applicable and possible, films or exhibitions) should be deposited with the Native representatives of the elders and traditional leaders of the community. Every effort should be made to see that such a representational body has an opportunity to view the films or exhibitions which result from work undertaken in the community.

This Code should not interfere with or preclude any formal agreements made between researchers and Native peoples for the course of research undertaken with Federal funds. Further, the Code does not preclude or supersede ethical codes subscribed to and endorsed by various professional associations, but rather intends only to make clear the standards expected of those receiving Endowment funds.

This Code conforms to the principles of Public Law 95-341 as amended (the Indian Religious Freedom Act), Public Law 89-665 as amended (the National Historic Preservation Act), and other relevant public laws governing relations with native peoples of North America. Those who direct projects that are subject to the Code of Ethics are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the laws on which it is based to ensure full compliance with the Code. Although the body of the law and customs on which the Code is constructed is rooted in relations with native peoples of North

America, researchers are urged to follow it whenever living cultures and peoples are involved.