



STORY FORWARD

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.

STORY FORWARD offers grants up to \$20,000 ONLY to previous EMS grantees (or current grantees in good standing) to build on or advance their original projects.

Key Dates (2025):

LOI deadline	June 9
Applicants notified on LOI status	July 7
Application opens	
Full Proposal deadline	September 2
Selections made and applicants notified by	October 31
GRANT PERIOD Begins	November 1

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

STORY FORWARD

The humanities-based projects developed by Expand Massachusetts Stories grantees are rich in the thoughtful ways they are implemented and in the diverse outcomes they produce. Often, the projects could be developed further beyond the methods originally used or shared with new audiences or in new contexts. 'Story Forward' addresses this need by providing funding *to previous or current grantees* who wish to continue or advance their EMS projects in some way.

This may include but is not limited to:

- **Oral histories:** Extend or add new individuals, populations or places to the original oral history collection
- **Museum exhibits and programs:** Expand or add displays; travel the exhibit to other community-centered sites
- **Documentary screenings:** Introduce short films made to new audiences and new community venues; shoot new footage
- **Educational materials for K-12 students:** Create curricula, study and engagement guides, workshops or teacher professional development based on the original project
- **Discussions:** Facilitate new discussion programs or create engagement opportunities
- **Archives:** Add projects to existing or new archives and/or expand public access
- **Humanities:** Deepen the humanities content and contextualization, and/or work with new humanities advisors
- **Partnerships:** Partner with other organizations or people to create new opportunities

These examples do not include all project possibilities. Each project is unique. Successful projects depend on their organizations' interpretations and abilities to further 'expand' the work and meet the overall aims of the Expand Massachusetts Stories grant.

Applicant Eligibility:

Applicants must:

- Have been awarded an Expand Massachusetts Stories grant between 2021 and 2023.
- Have EITHER completed the project and final report OR have submitted the project's interim report in the online platform at least three weeks before the LOI deadline, demonstrating that the project is at an appropriate stage for expansion or continuation.
- Have the same non-profit status as when they were originally awarded the grant, or provide Mass Humanities with an update on their status in the LOI.
- Serve Massachusetts residents.

Project Eligibility:

Story Forward projects must meet all basic EMS project requirements for budgets, expense limits, compliance and special project requirements related to films, oral history, and indigenous communities (see General Requirements starting on page 5)

EXCEPT:

- **The Humanities:** Humanities advisors are not required. Projects can rely on the past experience with their advisor to extend their work.
- **Matching Requirements:** Project budgets do not need a 1-to-1 match but must provide at least 10% cash match.

Application Process:

Story Forward has a two-step application process:

1. **Letter of Inquiry (LOI) due June 9:** Story Forward applicants will fill out and submit an LOI. Program staff will review LOI's and invite a subset of 10-20 applicants to proceed to a full proposal.

2. **Full Proposal due September 2:** Applicants with an approved LOI will proceed to draft and submit a full proposal. These proposals will be reviewed by Mass Humanities board members and/or advisors.

Submission Details:

Both the LOI and the final application are accessible via the Mass Humanities grant portal. The applicant can draw from their original proposal and duplicate certain sections into the new form/s.

FOR THE LOI:

You will be asked for:

- A Project title and brief statement
- Project timing
- How the project fits the Expand Massachusetts Stories initiative
- A brief project narrative
- Grant amount requested and approximate costs
- Public engagement ideas
- Project personnel names and roles

FOR THE FULL PROPOSAL:

If invited, you will be asked to provide:

- A detailed Project Narrative
- Work Plan and Timeline
- Event or Engagement details
- Budget details, with 10% cash contribution
- Outreach and Publicity plan
- Project team bios or resumes

Questions or assistance:

Program Officers can answer questions by email and have limited availability to discuss ideas by appointment. Please contact the Program Officer you've worked with. Or you can email us at: grants@masshumanities.org

All ‘Story Forward’ applicants should refamiliarize themselves with the general requirements for Mass Humanities’ Expand Massachusetts Stories in the following section:

Expand Massachusetts Stories Grants

General Requirements

Expand Massachusetts Stories grants offer up to \$20,000 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.

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

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Who Can Apply

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](#)

Fiscally sponsored applicants: 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.

What EMS Funds

Organizations 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; or provide opportunities for people to engage their understandings of their communities through the humanities. Successful proposals will demonstrate how the project contributes to a more inclusive story of Massachusetts. Mass Humanities is especially interested in projects based in the knowledge and wisdom that exists locally

Proposed projects need to:

- Have the goal of making narratives of Massachusetts accessible to Massachusetts residents at minimal cost to participants.
- Build on or advance their original EMS project in some fashion
- Have a clear objective and completion date.
- Use the tools of the humanities—inquiry, contextualization, and/or reflection (see “Humanities Subjects and Methods”).
- Primarily serve public audiences outside of 4-year college faculty and students.

Potential projects may include:

- Oral histories
- Community-centered Museum exhibitions
- Facilitated discussions about underrepresented aspects of local histories
- Exhibits and programs focused on new interpretations of collections
- Short documentary films (15-30 minutes) or digital media projects that present new insights into the lives of Massachusetts residents past or present
- Teacher professional development focused on connecting Massachusetts narratives to K-12 curriculum
- Programs that use inquiry, contextualization, and/or reflection to support residents in recording and exploring their lived experiences

Examples of funded EMS projects can be seen [here](#).

The Humanities

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.

**** A Humanities Advisor is NOT Required for Story Forward projects ****

What Expand Massachusetts Stories Grants Cannot Fund

1. Work undertaken or supplies purchased before or after the grant period.
2. Profit-making or fundraising projects; capital campaigns, or organizational strategic planning
3. Re-grants to other organizations
4. Direct social service, e.g., counseling, therapeutic, legal, or medical services
5. Projects *primarily* focused on the creation of art or artistic performances
6. Professional theater productions
7. Costs of entertainment or alcohol
8. Tickets costs if the revenue from ticket sales goes to the applicant organization
9. Capital improvements, construction, or restoration
10. Lobbying or advocacy projects for specific public policies or legislation
11. The promotion of a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view

12. Scholarships or prizes
13. Production of full-length (longer than 40 minutes) documentary films
14. General operating costs (outside of indirect project costs)

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.

Amount of Funding

Story Forward applicants can request up to \$20,000 in project funds. We encourage a range of projects, including smaller requests for smaller projects. For projects awarded grants, Mass Humanities will award requests in full.

Expense Limits

Mass Humanities limits spending 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 WILL NOT require a full 1-1 budget-match for projects.

**** Story Forward projects will require ONLY a 10% cash share****

Example: You request \$20,000 from Mass Humanities. You match that request with \$2000 in cash from any source, including foundation grants, operating budget, donations etc. This amount will be reflected in the budget form you will be asked to complete if invited to submit a full proposal.

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 November 1, 2025
- My project builds on or advances an EMS project
- My project plans to have deliverables by February 2027
- 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

Not sure about your answers? Email a project description to grants@masshumanities.org.

Review Criteria

Story Forward applicants will be reviewed first at the LOI stage and, if invited to apply, at the final proposal stage. 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. If applicable, any *optional* 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.

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 Advancement Plan: The proposal presents a coherent project (i.e. it is not merely an assembly of disparate work) based on or extending the original EMS project. 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 organization is able to contribute a 10% cash share to the project. 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 –including Letters of Inquiry (LOI) and full proposals-- are submitted via Mass Humanities online application system [HERE](#).

You can create an account or access your account at any time; however, the LOI form opens on March 10 and the final application opens July 7.

In 2025, applicants for STORY FORWARD will undertake a two-step process: Submitting a Letter of Inquiry (LOI), and, if invited, submitting a full proposal.

Create or access your account:

If new to Mass Humanities, you will need to **create an account with:**

1. Applicant 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.

2. The Applicant Organization Name, Address, Phone Number and IRS Tax Identification Number
 - 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.”

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.

Access and complete application forms

- 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.
- **Applicants can draw from their original Expand Massachusetts Stories proposal and duplicate certain sections into either the LOI and/or full proposal forms.**
- Submit LOI/Application: Make sure you’ve answered all the questions marked with a * and press “Submit.” As always, leave time to troubleshoot technical glitches. Your LOI/Application is due by 11:59pm on the proposal deadline.
- **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 any publicity, using the exact language and logos provided.

APPENDIX

Special Project Requirements

Film Project Requirements

Mass Humanities supports short documentary films 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 screening or 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 support distribution of a completed film through audience education and engagement.

Oral History and Story Collection 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:

1. A specific group of subjects and a strategy for getting them interviewed.
2. 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.
3. An interpretive/editorial deliverable that intentionally shares samples of the interviews. For example, an exhibit, public presentation, program, or website/page.
4. 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.

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Recorded interviews must be accompanied by a legal release. There is no standard form.
8. 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 & 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.