

2021-2024
Campaign Report

BY AND FOR THE PEOPLE



*"These stories are who
Massachusetts really is.
Without them, there is
no Massachusetts."*

Grantee feedback at
"The Future of Storytelling" workshop



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On The Cover

María Aybar of the Latinx Community Center for Empowerment examines photos at the Center for Lowell History. Aybar led a team at LCCE to create an archive of Lowell's Latinx culture and history, with the support of an Expand Massachusetts Stories grant.

Dear Friend—

In 2024, we honored the contributions of so many people who built and continue to sustain this organization. The 50th anniversary celebrations included three gatherings with our grantees and supporters, a [new publication](#) from the students of the Clemente Course in the Humanities, a special exchange with Belfast, Northern Ireland to [deepen our relationship to the life and legacy of Frederick Douglass](#), and a remarkable evening with this year's Governor's Awards recipients. Again and again, we reconnected with the roots of Mass Humanities while welcoming new colleagues and partners to our mission and programs.

The year also brought to a conclusion the transformative, three-year By and For the People campaign and strategic plan forged by our board and staff in 2021. With your support, we exceeded our fundraising goal of \$3 million. During a dark period in American history, clouded by the pandemic and increased political divisions, we challenged ourselves to meet the moment.

We continue to draw strength from the experiences generated by this plan and your support. Our grant-making grew to new heights in 2024, with more than \$1.35 million

in direct funding for community centers, libraries, museums, education providers, and more. We amplified the exciting work of storytellers who crafted new chapters to the unfolding tale of Massachusetts and its people. The launch of our partnership with the Smithsonian Institution [catalyzed conversations in small towns](#) about the past, present, and future of rural Massachusetts.

Just as they did 250 years ago, the local communities of Massachusetts influence the world. Our state's dedication to freedom and equality feels more resonant as we confront our shared challenges. In 2025, we carried the sacred stories of our grantees into discussions with legislators, partners, funders, and our national network of humanities councils, advocating for the power of Massachusetts to reimagine our democracy and our country.

We thank you for walking this path with us. While 2025 may bring new obstacles and decision points, we know we can count on the people of Mass Humanities to lead the way in their towns and cities, classrooms and living rooms. We look forward to celebrating more milestones with you this year.

Brian Boyles
Executive Director



THREE YEARS OF CREATING HUMANITIES OPPORTUNITIES

4

\$887K

CLEMENTE COURSE IN THE HUMANITIES

- Supported more than 460 adults through traditional Clemente courses and summer writing courses
- Provided free laptops to every student
- Launched summer courses at 6 sites where students earned an additional credit from Bard College
- Published 3 anthologies of student writing



Springfield
Clemente
Class of 2023

\$2.9M+

EXPAND MASSACHUSETTS STORIES

- 170 organizations supported
- 60% of grantees in 2024 were first-time recipients of a Mass Humanities grant
- 93% of projects in 2024 were led by people of color.

READING FREDERICK DOUGLASS TOGETHER

- Readings of Douglass increased 300%
- 60 readings were held in 2024
- MH created a fellowship program, hired two research fellows, and published original research about Douglass' life in 2024
- A contingent of staff and partners represented the program at Douglass Week in Northern Ireland in 2024
- Mass Humanities staff published a trauma-informed guide to help participants process feelings of racial trauma in 2023

\$199K



Reading Frederick
Douglass
Together in
Fitchburg

MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET

- During *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* (2022-2023), six host sites held 130 free public programs
- More than 23,000 people attended *Crossroads* events, 57% of whom were first-time visitors to their library or museum
- Volunteers contributed 3,000 hours of support to events and programs
- \$44,000 was raised between six host sites in Athol, Essex, Hull, Rutland, Sheffield, and Turners Falls

\$108K



Museum on Main
Street Crossroads in
Athol

\$7.2M+

TOTAL
GRANTS
AWARDED
2021-2024

In addition to these special initiatives, Mass Humanities grew its grantmaking capacity to meet the moment during a tumultuous period in our nation. With support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Mass Cultural

Council, the foundation distributed more than \$2.8M in grants to cultural nonprofits to support the response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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OUR **IMPACT**

When storytellers have the means to share their experiences, everyone benefits. Unseen connections emerge. People learn something new about their hometown, their neighbors, and even themselves. It's stories that fuel our collective imagination, and our ability to envision a better future. For these reasons, Mass Humanities prides itself on elevating stories to the forefront of our daily lives.

Partnering with **Mass Humanities** means seeing more of what we love, and **what connects us as humans.**

In 2024, Mass Humanities organized a series of convenings titled "[The Future of Storytelling](#)." The premise was simple: gather the MH community under one roof, discuss the nuances of narrative storytelling, and build a robust social network within the cultural nonprofit sector. 150 grantees, along with community partners, legislators, board members, and staff attended the convenings in Worcester, Holyoke, and Boston.

"The experience of being in community with the other storytellers of all kinds was irreplaceable," said Betsy More, Director of Programs at Jewish Women's Archive, who attended the gathering in Boston.

TYPES OF **PROJECTS WE FUND**



- Oral histories
- Walking tours
- Documentary films
- Podcasts
- Museum exhibitions
- K-12 curricula
- Community programs



OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

In 2021, the board and staff of Mass Humanities launched a new three-year strategic plan. The plan called on us to focus our grantmaking and programming capacity into four goals, each of which leverages the humanities to transform the cultural landscape of Massachusetts.

CATALYZING 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.

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.

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.

Grantee Highlight

FRAMINGHAM HISTORY CENTER

10



Anna Tucker, Claudia Ruiz Gustafson, and Patrick St. Pierre at FHC.



Listen to more
of FHC's story at
masshumanities.org

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Catalyzing 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.

In 2024, the Framingham History Center debuted ["Framingham's Collective Journeys: Stories of Immigration, 1960 - Present."](#) The exhibit was the first of its kind for FHC, in that its material was presented in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

"This exhibit shows that borders dissolve when stories are shared," said Anna Tucker, executive director of FHC. "People are craving a gathering space where they can exchange stories back and forth. And the History Center is known as a place where that happens."

The curatorial team insisted on involving community members at every stage of planning the exhibit, from building the displays and painting them, to contributing stories of their experiences, to translating information so that it follows cultural dialects.

"What we see with this exhibit is that Framingham is connected with the entire world," said Tucker. "And, that means intimately connected with all of Massachusetts."

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"I think that Framingham is this wonderfully loose net of all of these different people creating the fibers. ... when people come together, if it makes sense that these fibers are tightened a little bit. The holes are sort of mended and we get to look at each other as real people."

Patrick St. Pierre, Co-Curator

LATINX COMMUNITY CENTER OF EMPOWERMENT



Aybar and Leonardo
at LCCE in Lowell.



Listen to more of
LCCE's story at
masshumanities.org

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Elevate community leadership

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

Under the leadership of María Aybar and Diego Leonardo, the Latinx Community Center of Empowerment in Lowell [created the city's first archive of Latinx culture](#). The project, which was funded by an Expand Massachusetts Stories grant, brought together oral histories and photographs to fill in the gaps of the city's story. It also included a series of community conversations aimed at connecting people through storytelling.

The catalyst for creating the archive was simple: LCCE had heard public commentary about a lack of Latino leadership in the city, something that Aybar and Leonardo knew to be untrue.

"That narrative needs to shift and change around who we are," said Aybar. "I think that we need to give ourselves the opportunity to be the ones defining our stories."

With an impressive array of materials on hand, LCCE intends to digitize the archive so that it is easily accessible, said Leonardo. The organization plans to maintain a relationship with Mass Humanities moving forward.

"We're so grateful to receive this grant," said Aybar. "It really helps us see that people are interested in this. It's worthwhile. I think that with Mass Humanities...this really feels like a collaboration. "For me, being able to expand Massachusetts narratives is just so important because the youth deserves to feel visible and seen. That wasn't necessarily something that I had growing up here in Lowell, but that now I know we have the responsibility to do because we know better. I think that to us, this is a way of resisting."

"I think we need to give ourselves the opportunity to be the ones defining our stories."

María Aybar, EMS grant recipient

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

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.

Over the course of this three-year campaign, our generous community of supporters helped us exceed our \$3 million goal—raising \$3,004,848 in support of our mission to champion the public humanities. This incredible achievement was made possible by the deep commitment of individual donors, foundations, and corporate partners. We extend special thanks to those who supported the Governor's Awards in the Humanities, whose contributions helped shine a light on the power of storytelling, history, and cultural understanding. Your belief in our work continues to inspire us—and it enables us to remain steady as we enter our next chapter. Thank you.



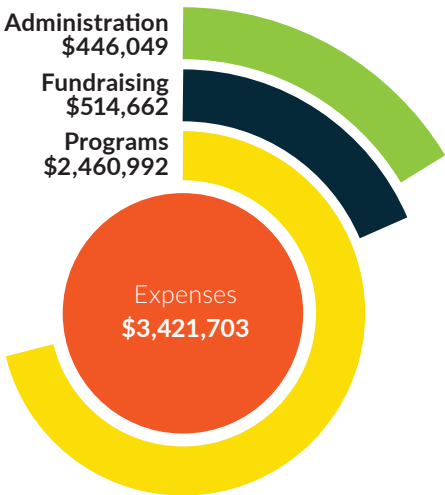
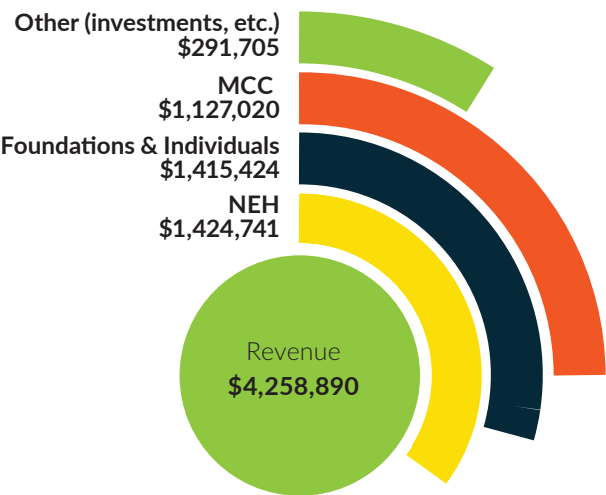
(Top to bottom) Governor's Awards honorees Bob Rivers, Jackie Jenkins-Scott, Cheryl Toney Holley, and Martín Espada.

(Left to right) Brian Boyles, Bob Rivers, Cheryl Toney Holley, Jackie Jenkins-Scott, Martín Espada, and Aaron Vega at the 2024 Governor's Awards.

"Through the support of Governor Healey, the legislature, and our allies at Mass Cultural Council and the Barr Foundation, we focus our grantmaking efforts on grassroots organizations with small budgets and infinite supplies of ingenuity and courage. Each year, we depend on supporters like you to respond to the needs and creativity of our local partners."

Aaron Vega,
Mass Humanities board chair, 2024-2026

FY24 REVENUE & EXPENSES



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

We are forever grateful for the support of Mass Cultural Council and the Barr Foundation. Our memorandum of understanding with Mass Cultural Council paved the way to launch EMS in 2021. A two-year, \$700k grant from the Barr Foundation the following year enabled us to expand the number of EMS grants we awarded. In total, we're proud to have awarded more than \$3 million in funding to 170 organizations during 2021-2024.



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES



Barr
Foundation

Grantee Highlight

AFRIMERICAN CULTURE INITIATIVE

"When I got the grant, I was just elated. This documentary proved to me I'm literally in the complete right place of what I want to do."

Marlon Solomon, EMS grant recipient

Marlon Solomon crosses in front of Nubian Station in the heart of Roxbury.



Listen to more of Marlon's story at masshumanities.org

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

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.

Marlon Solomon, founder of Afrimerican Culture Initiative in Boston, received an Expand Massachusetts Stories grant to fund a [documentary film about geographic displacement in urban settings](#). "Redlined Narratives: The Lost Cultural Hubs of Boston" tells the story of how redlining disproportionately affected communities of color in the city, specifically Roxbury.

"You have to teach your kids who they are and where they stand, because there's a continuation," says Solomon.

In his film, Solomon explains how red line maps are tools that were developed in the 1930s to identify the locations of immigrant communities. These maps were used by city officials and developers to determine where to build highways and expand urban infrastructure. Nubian Station, seen in the photo at the left, symbolizes the negative effects of redlining, says Solomon. Once a major stop on the MBTA's Orange Line, the station served as an economic conduit for the historically Black neighborhood. When the Orange Line was rerouted in 1987, Roxbury was thrust into economic turmoil. This shake up weakened the cultural landscape of the neighborhood as well. "Redlined Narratives" highlights these injustices while also educating viewers about the complex layers of terms like "urban renewal" and "development."

In 2024, Mass Humanities partnered with New England Public Media to produce a documentary series about Black experiences in western Massachusetts. "Legacies: Stories of Black History in the 413" presents three stories of resilience, including one woman's journey to find her roots, the work of pioneering AfriCOBRA artist and muralist Nelson Stevens, and the enduring history of Mount Calvary Baptist Church and its congregation. The films were broadcast live on television in December 2024 and January 2025.

\$100,000 +

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*We create opportunities for
the people of Massachusetts to
transform their lives and build a
more equitable commonwealth
through the humanities.*

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