2027 Reading Douglass Grant



Reading Frederick Douglass Together

A Mass Humanities Program

Frederick Together Guidelines

Reading Frederick Douglass Together Grants support public readings and discussions in Massachusetts of Frederick Douglass's famous Fourth of July address, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"

Readings can take place anywhere, from community centers to historical societies to town greens. At each event, people take turns reading parts of the speech until it is completed. Each community considers the meaning of the speech in the past and its resonances in the present. Readings typically take place between Juneteenth and Fourth of July, but communities also host readings on other days of remembrance or significance. Mass Humanities invites grantees to host a reading during African American History Month and to commemorate the observance of Frederick Douglass's birthday, both in February. While discussions are not required, they are strongly encouraged. Please contact your program officer if you need assistance with planning a discussion.

Amount of Funding
Applicants can request funds up to $1,000 for a reading, or up to $1,800 if the event includes a formatted discussion.

What is a "formatted discussion?"
A discussion ***goes beyond*** opening or closing remarks about the speech's historical and contemporary context. Mass Humanities considers discussion to be deeper engagement through facilitated question and response and/or supplemental activities (see below). These can take place before, during, or after the reading; either the day of or days following.

Examples of discussion or supplemental activities include but are not limited to:

1. Facilitation formats discussed in the **Trauma-Informed Discussion Guide**
2. Walking tour of historic sites connected to Douglass or the abolition movement (see our interactive map).
3. A guest panel discussion
4. Reading Douglass's narratives or biographies as a book club
5. Hands-on group activities that require discussion of themes

For applicants awarded grants, Mass Humanities will award requests in full.

Timeline
Applications will open December 14, 2026. Make sure you submit your application in time for your reading to be funded. Use the following calendar to make sure you choose the right dates for your grant period and event.

Funded events must take place in 2027.

Your Grant Period Start Date must be after the award announcement date.

Your event date should be at least 2-3 weeks after the award announcement date to allow enough time to include Mass Humanities in publicity about your reading. For example, if you want to host your program on April 10th, you will need to apply no later than the February 19th submission date. You may apply by any submission date for Juneteenth and July 4th events.

Application and Awards Calendar

Application Submitted By	Announcement Date
January 15, 2027	February 1, 2027
February 19, 2027	March 8, 2027
March 19, 2027	April 5, 2027
April 23, 2027	May 10, 2027

Who is Eligible to Apply?

All nonprofit, government organizations, and state or federally recognized tribes, that serve Massachusetts residents are eligible to apply. Mass Humanities does not award funding to individuals.

Ad-hoc groups must find an eligible organization to be their fiscal sponsor. Fiscal sponsors are nonprofit organizations that manage the grant funds and have signed fiscal sponsor agreements with the group that will host the reading.

What we cannot fund

- Work undertaken or supplies purchased before or after the grant period

- Fundraising activities, capital campaigns, or organizational strategic planning
- Readings that do not primarily serve Massachusetts residents
- Re-grants to other organizations
- The promotion of a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view
- Lobbying or advocacy for specific public policies or legislation
- Direct social service, e.g., counseling, therapeutic, legal, or medical services
- The creation of professional art or artistic performances
- Ticket costs if the revenue from ticket sales goes to the applicant organization
- Cost of entertainment or alcohol
- Scholarships or prizes

What we require

Applications must:

- Have a plan for gathering a community of readers, either virtually or in-person, or both. The plan should include date, time, location, media & outreach, and incorporation of the Trauma Informed Guide.
- Please note the date and location must be **secured,** instead of *proposed* at time of application. You will be required to submit proof of date and venue secured in application.
- Complete an accurate budget (see "Budget Limits" for details).

Budget Limits:

- 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.
- 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).
- Mass Humanities funds can only be used for supplies directly related to the reading. See our FAQ below for examples.

To avoid underspending funds, or major changes to the final budget, it is best to obtain quotes for costs related to printing and publicity.

Reporting and Publicity

- Funded projects will receive 100% of their award upon submitting their grant contract.
- Completion of final report on project outcomes, public engagement, and use of funds is required to remain eligible for future grant opportunities.
- Funded projects will be required to submit attendance numbers from their events.
- Funded projects that need to make major changes to the scope, timeline, format, key project staff, or budget changes of more than $500 per-line item should submit a "change request" form in the online grants system for approval.
- **Funded projects will acknowledge Mass Humanities and the Mass Cultural Council in publicity.**

How to Apply

If your organization is a 501(c)(3), government entity, or state or federally recognized tribe, 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.

Log in to the application system here.

Event Preparation

To support your event and encourage collaboration between communities, Mass Humanities will host a LIVE webinar on Wednesday January 13th at noon. Additionally, there will be pre-recorded mini-webinars available. The webinars will cover the application grant process from beginning to end, digital promotion, partnerships, discourse guidance and logistics. You will find links to the webinars as they are posted on our Reading Frederick Douglass Page.

Mass Humanities has developed resources for readings, including a trauma-informed discussion guide, an event safety guide and media guide all available on Mass Humanities' website.

If you are a first-time grantee, or if you require additional support, it is strongly recommended that you schedule a 15-minute consult with the program officer using the link below:

https://calendly.com/lbosworthma/reading-fd-togther

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can I apply for this grant if my organization has an open grant in another program?

A. Yes, if your grant is good standing, you may also apply for this grant.

Q. Do I have to have a project scholar for my reading?

A. While it is not required, having a project scholar is highly recommended. A scholar is anyone with formal or informal knowledge on topics such as Frederick Douglass, Local History, American History, Civil Rights, and Civics. Scholars are able to do such leading as: provide historical and/or contemporary context, facilitate discussion groups, provide additional resources, engage audience in critical thinking and meaningful, respectful sharing.

Q. Do I have to host a discussion with my reading?

A. While it is not currently a requirement, a follow-up discussion is strongly recommended. The Trauma Informed Discussion Guide offers support with hosting a discussion for all levels of experience.

Q. I am hosting an event for Juneteenth, how early can I submit an application?

A. You can apply as early as the first deadline for an event occurring in 2027.

Q. Can I use the funds for art supplies?

A. Any materials purchased with grant funds must be directly related to a reading. For example, supplies for face painting would not be considered “directly” related. However, coloring pages of Frederick Douglass and crayons would be “directly” related.

Q. Can I use the funds for promotional merchandise, such as T-shirts or banners?

A. Promotional merchandise must be directly related to the reading event. They should reference “Reading Frederick Douglass Together” and include Mass Humanities Logo and if applicable the Mass Cultural Council Logo.

Q. Can I use the funds to pay myself as the Project Director?

A. Yes, provided this is allowed by your organization.

Q. How much is allowed for food and refreshments?

A. Mass Humanities has removed the $500 limit on food and refreshments to accommodate the various event sizes and attendance. The food costs should align with the event type and size.

Q. How soon will I know if I receive the grant?

A. It can take up to three weeks to receive a notification email from our grants management system. Be sure to check your email spam folder.

Q. If approved, how soon will I receive the grant funds?

A. Once you receive a grant notification, you will be required to sign and submit a grant agreement. The grant management system will notify you once your grant agreement is approved. Please allow 2-4 weeks for payment once the agreement is approved.

Q. What should I do if I need to change the date of my reading?

A. Please notify your program officer via email if the date change is within your grant period so that we may update our media. If the event will take place outside of the grant period, you will need to submit an extension/change request form in the grant management system.