



VERMONT HUMANITIES

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Vermont Humanities Program Narrative for State of Vermont FY 2024

Reporting period: July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022

Note: Our fiscal year is the calendar year so our 2023 budget will include the first half of the state's 2024 budget. In this narrative we are reporting on the most recently completed Vermont fiscal year, FY22.

Our Mission Statement: Using the humanities, we connect with people across Vermont to create just, vibrant, and resilient communities and to inspire a lifelong love of learning.

We believe that the humanities are tools for change, not a set of books on a shelf. We are reimagining our work by making equity, accessibility, and accountability central to everything we do as stated in our recently approved Five-Year Strategic Plan (2022-2027). [Read more about the plan and our Mission, Vision, and Values.](#)

As the pandemic lingered, the staff and board of Vermont Humanities continued to focus on the three straightforward goals identified in January 2021:

1. Provide leadership for the cultural sector as we all work to weather this pandemic.
2. Create new and innovative ways to present high quality, Covid-safe humanities programming.
3. Keep our scholars, trainers, and staff working to promote the public humanities in Vermont.

These goals are more relevant now, as the long-lasting impact of the pandemic continues to drive our daily work. We have continued to innovate in our own programs, especially in the areas of early literacy, grantmaking, and our award-winning Vermont Reads program.

During the pandemic, we relaunched www.vermonthumanities.org with a strong focus on meeting accessibility standards. We reorganized the site to highlight user-friendly digital content and to raise the profile of our early literacy offerings and our increasingly vital role in funding public humanities work across Vermont. The reorganized website aims to make it easier for visitors to book programs such as Speakers Bureau talks, learn about upcoming events, and apply for grants. The new site was built to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standard 2.1 Level AA; these standards define how to make content more accessible to all people, including those with visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning, and neurological disabilities.

Covid-19 Pandemic Relief

Over the last two years, we partnered with the Vermont Arts Council to distribute almost \$2 million in CARES Act and American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds to cultural organizations in all of Vermont's 14 counties. We are delighted that the legislature made a \$6 million investment in the cultural and creative sector in 2021 and has made an additional \$9 million available for Vermont FY2023. These new grants will be available to both nonprofit and for-profit creative organizations including all humanities organizations from the CARES and ARPA grant rounds, assuming they meet the financial need guidelines. We will continue our partnership with the Vermont Arts Council to assist in promoting this grant program and to emphasize the importance of the cultural sector in building strong and vibrant communities.

Vermont Humanities works in partnership with and facilitates programming for many community organizations across the state including libraries, schools, community centers, veteran's groups, and historical societies, as well as in Vermont State Parks. In FY2021, 31,365 people took part in our

programs and we held 562 activities, including 197 digital events, hosted by us or by our partners. Internet-based and streaming resources continued to be as important as ever during 2021 and 2022 season.

Service to the Field: Public Humanities and Literacy Programs

First Wednesdays lectures (held October 2021 through May 2022 during this reporting period) take place in nine hub libraries and statewide via Zoom offerings, which serve not only the people in those hub communities, but often those much further afield. Using Zoom to present most of the lectures in the 2021-2022 season allowed participants to attend from across the United States and beyond, though the core audience remained Vermonters.

The online events expanded our reach into the community and provided accessible programming to those who cannot or do not wish to drive to a host library. With our nine host venues, our partnerships ensured that the in-person events were made accessible to the greater populations that the libraries serve.

The 2021-2022 First Wednesdays season breakdown is as follows:

- Number of events: 72
- Attendance in person: 288
- Attendance via Zoom: 2,749
- Attendance via post-event streaming: 2,389
- Total attendance: 5,426

Vermont Reads 2021: *We Contain Multitudes* programming engaged almost 2,000 participants beginning in late June 2021 and concluding on June 30, 2022. Author Sarah Henstra was in residence from April 11-15, 2022, and participated in in-person, digital, and hybrid events. Fifty-eight communities across Vermont hosted Vermont Reads projects in 2021, a good number given the restrictions of the ongoing pandemic. We distributed over 3,900 copies of the book through project hosts such as schools, libraries, community centers, and other nonprofits.

To support the study of *We Contain Multitudes* in Vermont communities, we created a compelling roster of events with Henstra that included a statewide virtual discussion for Vermont schools featuring a panel of Vermont high school students, visits to Rutland Union High School and Hazen Union High School, two in-person First Wednesdays talks, and a visit to a Middlebury College creative writing class.

We once again partnered with The Vermont State Library to offer Vermont Reads: *We Contain Multitudes* to Vermont state employees.

Our Vermont Reads work continues currently with *El viaje más caro / The Most Costly Journey*. To date, Vermont Humanities has distributed more copies of the book than ever before and is close to having a record number of community programs.

Our **Speakers Bureau** enables libraries, historical societies, and other community organizations to offer free public programs that are high quality, accessible, well-publicized, and affordable. From July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, we facilitated 99 programs (77 in-person, 20 virtual, 2 hybrid) and served 3,007 participants.

Our popular **Reading and Discussion** programs are designed to strengthen communities and encourage lifelong learning and literacy. During the reporting period, 700 people attended 60 events (37 in-person, 2 virtual, 21 hybrid).

Our **Early Literacy programs** primarily focus on three initiatives: **Never Too Early**, which provides trainings for childcare providers, center directors, and librarians; **Read With Me** programs at the Janet S. Munt Family Room in Burlington which helps support a predominantly New American population of refugees, asylees, and immigrants; and the **Vermont Early Learning Initiative (VELI)** which partners with libraries across the state to support their programmatic needs and interests. During the reporting period, we estimate that these programs directly benefitted a total of 530 participants with the following breakdown: Never Too Early – 150, Read With Me – 110, and VELI – 280. The Never Too Early trainings were attended by 117 providers (who care for approximately 585 children), and VELI served 37 librarians (who then in turn reached approximately 259 children through programming and other outreach).

As the Covid-19 crisis continued to overburden medical professionals, the **Literature and Medicine** book groups offered an outlet for pandemic stress relief and provided a sense of normalcy. Groups at two hospitals— The Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital and the Rutland Regional Medical Center—met regularly from September through April and October through March respectively and served 43 unique participants with a combined attendance of 258. We sponsored 10 in-person **Humanities Camps** from June through August 2021 in Brattleboro, Burke, Canaan, East Corinth, Fair Haven, Richford, St. Albans, St. Johnsbury, West Rutland, and Williamstown with an average attendance of 17 campers each day for a total of 170 students. In summer 2022, we served over 300 middle school students through 12 traditional Humanities Camps around the state (209 campers) as well as three long-running partner program camps in Brownington, Greensboro, and Starksboro (almost 100 campers). Approximately 700 books were distributed to teachers, students, and school libraries.

Our 48th annual **Fall Conference**, *This Mazéd World: The Humanities and Climate Change* kicked off on October 6, 2021 with four First Wednesday talks and the conference continued over one week from October 18 to 23 with an additional six events (five virtual and one live event). The conference concluded with an in-person concert by the Fry Street Quartet, featuring an original score by composer Laura Kaminsky, which blended the quartet's performance with compelling video footage and expert live storytelling on the climate crisis by physicist Dr. Robert Davies of Utah State University. This concert was presented in partnership with the UVM Lane Series and was attended by 200 in-person audience members, plus a number who watched via live stream. The week-long conference reached a total of 960 participants.

Since the end of the reporting period, we returned to in-person events for the October 2022 Fall Conference. Instead of a single location over two days, we spread the festival events all over the state throughout the month of October. The new format reached more Vermonters than ever and most events were free and open to the public.

During the summer of 2021, we recorded two virtual readings and hosted one in-person event as part of our **Words in the Woods** program, a recent partnership with Vermont State Parks and the Vermont Arts Council. The program brought Vermont poets into state parks to share their craft and included Shanta Lee at Sweet Pond State Park, Verandah Porche at Knight Point State Park, and Sarah Audsley at Taconic Mountains Ramble State Park. This second season of the program had an attendance of 749 people (20 in-person and 729 virtual). The 2022 season kicked off in June with Abenaki singer-songwriter Bryan Blanchette, joined by a small, amplified band of musicians. They performed original and contemporary songs at Lake Elmore State Park. Fifty-seven audience members attended this event and over 175 people have watched a recording of the performance.

Our **Community Grants** program budget continues to expand exponentially as we prioritize sending more resources to local communities engaging in public humanities projects. We funded 64 projects with awards totaling \$202,390. This increase is due in part to pandemic recovery efforts, but we also bolstered and supported the cultural sector by providing resources for high-quality, diverse, public humanities programming across Vermont. Examples of successful grants during this time period include:

- **Camp Outright:** \$5,000 to support a residential summer camp program for LGBTQ+ youth. Campers ages 13 to 17 gathered together in nature to celebrate LGBTQ+ culture and build community.
- **Northern Spy Farm: The Sheeko Sheeko Project: Deep North:** \$5,000 to support a storytelling project that celebrated Somalis resettled in Vermont. The project includes a published book of oral histories and a series of public events and readings.
- **Vermont Abenaki Artists Association: Two Eyed Seeing: Bringing Together Abenaki and Archaeological Perspectives in N'Dakinna (our homeland):** \$5,000 to support a working group of Abenaki culture bearers, educators, and scholars collaborating with archaeologists to compare perspectives on up to three archaeological sites important to the Abenaki community.

Finally, in an additional special project outside our regular grants program, Vermont Humanities partnered with diverse organizations and scholars to encourage Vermonters of all ages to participate in our

democracy. Originally part of our **Vermont Civics Collaborative** of 2021, Vermont Humanities and the Vermont Secretary of State commissioned a new resource from the Center for Cartoon Studies called ***“Freedom and Unity: A Graphic Guide to Civics and Democracy in Vermont.”*** Other collaborating partners include the Vermont Department of Libraries, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the Snelling Center for Government, the Vermont Arts Council, the Vermont Community Foundation, the Abenaki Arts and Education Center, and the Vermont State Curator’s Office, which will distribute the comic book guide to school groups visiting our state capitol. The resource guide is “evergreen” and will be widely distributed through our own programs and by our project partners. Over 20,000 copies will ultimately be given away to youth and adults across Vermont.

Vermont Humanities
January through December 2023

INCOME

Annual	\$ 255,000
Restricted Contributions	<u>\$ 335,000</u>
Contributions/Support	\$ 590,000

Federal Funding	
General Appropriation	\$ 750,000
One-time Grants	<u>\$ 25,000</u>
State Funding	
General Appropriation	\$ 241,885
VT State Library/IMLS Grant	<u>\$ 50,000</u>
Government Grants	\$ 1,066,885

Program Service Fees

Underwriting Sponsorships	\$ 25,000
Program Service Fees	<u>\$ 27,250</u>
	\$ 52,250

Special Events	\$ 10,000
Investment and Endowment Drawdown	\$ 60,000
Other Revenue	<u>\$ 70,000</u>
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 1,779,135

EXPENSES

Payroll & Benefits	\$ 975,874
Professional Development	\$ 8,250
Mileage (Staff)	<u>\$ 10,500</u>
Payroll	\$ 994,624

Facilities **\$ 22,000**

Honoraria	\$ 150,375
Limited PT Salaries	\$ 60,421
Facilities & Food	\$ 5,000
Staff, Scholar, & LPT Reimbursable Expenses	\$ 19,000
Participant Stipends	\$ 16,000
Books	\$ 67,035
Other Program Materials	\$ 4,500
Postage & Shipping	\$ 7,130
Grants & Awards	\$ 315,500
Accessibility Services	<u>\$ 8,000</u>
Program Expenses	\$ 652,961

Communication/Development **\$ 66,750**

General & Admin **\$ 142,800**

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 1,879,135
NET INCOME*	\$ (100,000.00)

*offset with prior year's surplus