



## **Vermont Humanities Program Narrative for State of Vermont FY 2025**

***Reporting period: July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023***

*Note: Our fiscal year is the calendar year so our 2024 budget will include the first half of the state's 2025 budget. Our FY24 budget will be approved by our board in November 2023. We have included our FY23 budget here for reference and will send the FY24 budget after board approval. In this narrative we are reporting on the most recently completed Vermont fiscal year, FY23.*

**An important note on the July floods:** Because this report is for FY23, we have not included full information on the impacts of the natural disaster that hit our state ten days into the current fiscal year. Although our own infrastructure escaped largely unscathed, dozens of cultural organizations were deeply impacted. Vermont Humanities has been working closely with the Vermont Arts and Culture Disaster and Resilience Network to give guidance and assistance to our impacted partners including providing significant funding for recovery through our own grant program and in concert with other funders including Vermont Community Foundation, Vermont Arts Council, Vermont Department of Libraries, and others. We would be happy to provide more information on this work at any time.

**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. Throughout our lives, we all explore what it means to be human. We collectively discuss and think about what makes up a good life, including the responsibilities of citizenship, how to be of service to others, and our relationship to the natural world. These questions arise in our town halls, in our schools, in our backyards, on our village greens, and in our faith communities.

Humanities come to life through our connections with each other. They help us achieve a better understanding of the past, a stronger analysis of the present, and a more hopeful vision for the future. As stated in our [Five-Year Strategic Plan \(2022-2027\)](#), questions of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to our work and our approach is embodied in our values. Vermont Humanities staff and board commit to living up to our values in both our long-range planning and our daily work:

**Engagement:** We will aim to integrate humanities into the educational, civic, and economic life of Vermont. Because the humanities include everyone, we will work to bring down barriers to inclusion.

**Equity:** We will use our programs to help address historic gaps in power between groups and to amplify under-represented voices.

**Community:** We will encourage people to form bonds across boundaries, develop channels of cooperation, and nurture resiliency in their local communities and statewide.

**Partnership:** We will build and grow long-term relationships with communities and organizations and form a broader spectrum of partners across racial, class, and geographic lines.

**Humility:** We will acknowledge that we have much to learn from our colleagues and our communities and that we do not have all the answers.

**Curiosity:** We will help Vermonters learn about the world and themselves and encourage everyone to engage with the humanities in the ways that they find most compelling.

**Excellence:** We will nurture, support, and promote the achievements and innovations of humanists and cultural organizations in Vermont.

**Relationships:** We will foster sustainable and healthy relationships among our staff and board members, with our partners, and with the organizations we support.

**Bravery:** We will help create spaces for complex—and sometimes difficult—conversations about human experience. We will learn from our mistakes, improve our ways of working whenever we fall short, and reduce the influence of the biases that we all carry.

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 2022, 38,188 people took part in our programs, and we held 677 activities, either hosted by us or by our community partners. Internet-based and streaming resources continued to be as important as ever during the 2022-2023 season.

#### **Service to the Field: Public Humanities and Literacy Programs**

First Wednesdays lectures (held October 2022 through May 2023 during this reporting period) took place in-person in nine hub libraries and virtually statewide, serving people not only in those hub communities, but often those much further afield. We are pleased to say that our 2022-2023 First Wednesdays season was successful even given the challenges of in-person programming as we recover from the pandemic. One way we tried to meet the needs of both in-person and virtual audiences was by providing an online event on the second Wednesday of each month. While this model did bring in some audiences, we continued to field questions about the possibility of virtual ways to engage with our speakers at the libraries. This feedback informed significant programmatic changes for the 2023-24 season that are already showing great promise. We also held a completely virtual mini season through the dark winter months of January, February, and March. Strengthening our partnerships with several community public access stations across the state also allowed some in-person events to be livestreamed and recorded for distribution throughout the year.

#### **The 2022-2023 First Wednesdays season breakdown is as follows:**

- Number of events: 59
- Attendance via in-person or livestream: 2,020
- Attendance via post-event streaming: 1,277
- Total attendance: 3,297

**Vermont Reads 2022: *The Most Costly Journey***, a collection of comics telling the stories of Vermont's migrant farmworkers, has been our most successful book selection in the 20-year history of the program with 108 communities hosting projects around the book's themes and almost 45% of applicants new this season. These Vermont Reads hosts led book discussions, screened movie nights, offered cooking demonstrations, staged theater performances, and organized many other public events related to the book's themes. During the program, Vermont Humanities distributed over 5,000 copies of the book in English, and 500 copies in Spanish.

Vermont Reads 2022 resonated strongly with schools statewide. Fifty-three different schools participated in the program, the largest number since 2014. We also hit our stride in leveraging statewide partnerships including collaborations with the Open Door Clinic, the Vermont Folklife Center, UVM Extension, the Center for Cartoon Studies, and Migrant Justice, among many others. The State of Vermont Office for Racial Justice distributed and discussed the book as part of their IDEAL program, which helps local leaders advance equity in their communities through workshops, technical assistance, grant opportunities, and facilitated spaces to share with and learn from peers around the state.

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, 2022 to June 30, 2023, we facilitated 99 programs and served 3,345 participants.

Our popular **Reading and Discussion** programs are designed to strengthen communities and encourage lifelong learning and literacy. During the reporting period, 998 people attended 76 events.

Our **Early Literacy programs** primarily focus on three initiatives: **Never Too Early (NTE)**, which offers trainings for childcare providers, center directors, and librarians; **Read With Me (RWM)** 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 Never Too Early trainings were attended by 133 providers (who care for approximately 665 children/families), our Read With Me program served 38 educators through trainings at Mercy Connections and 896 children and families at the Family Room, and VELI served 29 libraries (who then in turn reached approximately 1,305 children through programming and other outreach).

Our **Literature and Medicine Reading and Discussion Groups** were offered at two hospitals, Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital, and the Rutland Regional Medical Center. They met regularly from September through April and November through April respectively and served 67 unique participants. Also, we partnered with the University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine to analyze our Literature and Medicine program as part of their Public Health curriculum. Seven virtual sessions were held from January through June 2023 with a total attendance of 79 participants.

Vermont Humanities served over 350 middle school students during the time period through 15 traditional **Humanities Camps** around the state (252 campers) as well as three long-running partner program camps in Brownington, Greensboro, and Starksboro (almost 100 campers). Approximately 750 books were distributed to teachers, students, and school libraries, and we served many returning schools and camp directors who pursued a variety of inspired and informative camp themes to immerse their students in authentic and fun learning experiences.

Our annual **Fall Festival** (formerly Fall Conference), *Where We Land* kicked off on October 3 with a live event with #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Jason Reynolds who discussed his collaborative work on the book *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*, a reimagining of Ibram X. Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning*, "remixed" at a special hybrid event for Vermont middle school students. Reynolds was met onstage at The Flynn by a panel of students who interviewed him about his books and his efforts as an author and activist to inspire social change. The festival continued through November 5, 2022, with a concluding event at the Chandler Center for the Arts featuring the internationally renowned Garifuna Collective. The evening began with a community potluck, moved into a Q&A session in which the performers related stories about the Garifuna people of Honduras and Belize, and ended with a musical presentation. The festival included 10 events and reached almost 6,500 in-person and virtual viewers.

In summer of 2022, our **Words in the Woods** program, in partnership with Vermont State Parks and the Vermont Arts Council, brought four Vermont poets (Bryan Blanchette, Toussaint St. Negritude, Carol Potter, and Keysi Montas) into the state parks for a series of free events. The first two programs were recorded and, to date, have been viewed 528 times while the in-person series' attendance total was 135.

Our **Community Grants** program budget continues to expand exponentially as we prioritize sending more resources to local communities engaging in public humanities projects. During the grant period, we funded 78 projects with awards totaling \$161,490. This support 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:

- **Two Daughters Production:** \$5,000 for a series of audio stories that follow Afghan women who fled their homes after the Taliban took over their country, were resettled in Brattleboro, and are now staking a claim in their new hometown.
- **Stone Valley Arts:** \$5,000 to support a multi-year collaboration with the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association celebrating Art, Heritage, and Culture of a community that encompasses 13,000 years. Events will include an art show and outreach events.
- **Friends of the Fletcher Free Library: \$5,000 to support** free public programming related to the April 2023 exhibit *Telling a People's Story: African American Children's Illustrated Literature*.

Finally, we are continuing our work with the Secretary of State's Office and the Vermont State Curator's Office on topics related to civics education including the second printing of our widely distributed *Freedom & Unity* comic and a version geared for K-4<sup>th</sup> graders.

## Vermont Humanities

Approved January 2023-December 2023 Budget

### INCOME

Annual	\$ 255,000
Restricted Contributions	<u>\$ 335,000</u>
<b>Contributions/Support</b>	<b>\$ 590,000</b>
Federal Funding	
General Appropriation	\$ 750,000
One-time Grants	\$ 25,000
State Funding	
General Appropriation	\$ 241,885
VT State Library/IMLS Grant	<u>\$ 50,000</u>
<b>Government Grants</b>	<b>\$ 1,066,885</b>
Underwriting Sponsorships	\$ 25,000
Program Service Fees	\$ 27,250
<b>Program Service Fees</b>	<b>\$ 52,250</b>
Special events	\$ 10,000
Investment and Endowment Drawdown	<u>\$ 60,000</u>
<b>Other Revenue</b>	<b><u>\$ 70,000</u></b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 1,779,135</b>

### EXPENSES

Payroll & Benefits	\$ 975,874
Professional development	\$ 8,250
Mileage (Staff)	<u>\$ 10,500</u>
<b>Payroll</b>	<b>\$ 994,624</b>
<b>Facilities</b>	<b>\$ 22,000</b>
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>
<b>Program Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 652,961</b>
<b>Communications/Development</b>	<b>\$ 66,750</b>
<b>General &amp; Admin</b>	<b>\$ 142,800</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 1,879,135</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>\$ (100,000)</b>

Offset with prior year's cash reserve.