



# VERMONT HUMANITIES

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February 1, 2024

Hon. Rep. Diane Lanpher, Chair  
House Appropriations Committee  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633

**Re: B.812 Vermont Humanities Council**

**FY25 Budget Impact:** Vermont Humanities is requesting a 3% increase in our base budget amount from \$300,000 in FY24 to \$309,000 in FY25, in line with the Governor's recommendation.

**Dear Rep. Lanpher and Members of the Committee:**

Thank you for supporting public humanities engagement in every corner of our state through the annual appropriations process. Vermont Humanities turns 50 in 2024, and the legislature's support empowers us to meet our mission, to sustain and grow our work, and to prepare for the next fifty years. We greatly appreciate your commitment to keeping the humanities alive and thriving in communities around the state.

As we celebrate the past and build excitement about our future, we recognize the many people and partnerships that have stood with us through this journey thus far, and how our continued success is truly a community effort. We also recognize that we do our work in N'Dakinna, the traditional and unceded land of the Abenaki people who continue to live and work in Vermont today.

Since we last reported to the committee, we have final numbers for our 2023 grantmaking and community support that demonstrate our immense growth over the last year. We awarded \$415,000 in community grants in 2023 – an 80% increase over 2022, made possible in part by the Legislature's significantly increased investment for FY24. Adding to that, we distributed an additional \$400,000 in flood recovery grants after the devastating events of last June.

In our regular 2023 grantmaking programs, we awarded almost \$250,000 for 54 **Project Grants** that funded community initiatives with awards up to \$5,000. Additionally, we awarded over \$33,000 for 35 **Rapid Response Grants** that support quick turn-around, small projects for humanities-focused community initiatives or unanticipated needs. In 2023, we also awarded our first **Partnership Grants**, a three-year commitment to eight organizations totaling \$65,000 per year for 2024-2026.

- 40 of all grant recipients received their first Vermont Humanities grant in 2023.
- For Partnership Grants: 3 of the 8 grants were first-time grantees, although one had previously received emergency COVID funding.
- For Project Grants: 20 applicants were first-time grantees.
- For Rapid Response Grants: 17 applicants were first-time grantees.



Please click [here](#) for a full list of grant recipients. Below are just a few examples of 2023 grants:

- **Abenaki Circle of Courage:** Awarded \$10,000 annually to support the re-establishment of their annual Memorial Day weekend Abenaki Heritage Celebration.
- **Clemmons Family Farm:** Awarded \$10,000 annually to support their Windows to a Multicultural World Initiative which aims to develop curriculum modules that incorporate art and teach history focused on the multicultural diaspora of Black people.
- **Retreat Farm:** Awarded \$10,000 annually to support the farm's partnership with the Atowi Project to develop place-based programming centering on Abenaki history and the natural landscape.
- **Sundog Poetry Center: *Justice and Poetry For All*:** Awarded \$5,000 for an inclusive event that affirms the cultural and artistic contributions of Vermont's LGBTQ+ communities through poetry workshops, readings, and community dialogue.

**2023 Floods Recovery Grants:** Thrown back into crisis mode, as torrential rains damaged thousands of buildings around the state in July 2023, Vermont Humanities again stepped into leadership to assist with recovery efforts. We worked 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.

Vermont Humanities allocated \$400,000 in flexible emergency support to over 40 flood-damaged institutions to help them build back stronger. We will continue collaborating with our partners in 2024 and beyond on additional resilience strategies. The full floods recovery grants list is not yet publicly available as we continue to finalize grant contracts.

**2023 Sponsorships:** We provided further local and statewide support in the amount of \$35,000 to a variety of events and organizations including the Vermont Library Association Conference, Bookstock Festival of Words, Non-Fiction Comic Book Festival, Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival, Pride Center of Vermont, Vermont International Film Festival, Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children, and the Greater Burlington Multicultural Center Speakers Series, among many others.

**2023 Early Literacy Grants** were made in two of our programs: the **Vermont Early Learning Initiative (VELI)**, which partners with libraries across the state to support their programmatic needs and interests and summer **Humanities Camps**, which provide high-quality, enriching educational activities for middle and high school students. We provide more detail on two of those programs below:

We increased the number of **VELI** libraries from 11 to 16, providing them with books, hands-on materials, and training in early and preschool literacy, preschool mathematics, social-emotional development, and visual literacy. In addition, we awarded a total of \$24,000 in grants (\$1,500 per library) to support flexible funding for literacy projects. The libraries currently taking part in the program are in Barre, Bellows Falls, Bennington, Bradford, Brattleboro, Cavendish/Proctorsville, Colchester, Craftsbury, Enosburg Falls, Hyde Park, Lyndonville, Orwell, Poultney, Randolph, Swanton, and Westford. We are already seeing how this program can encourage other initiatives, including Humanities Camps and enhanced connections with area schools. We also held our first in-person conference with the VELI librarians in August and we continue to be impressed with the dedication of public librarians in meeting the evolving needs of their communities through their responsiveness, adaptability, and commitment to providing equitable access to information, programming, and other resources.