



Vermont Humanities Program Report for State of Vermont, FY 2023

Mission Statement: Vermont Humanities seeks to engage all Vermonters in the world of ideas, foster a culture of thoughtfulness, and inspire a lifelong love of reading and learning.

Note: Our fiscal year is the calendar year, and so our 2022 budget relates to the state's 2023 budget. Our FY22 budget was approved by our board in November 2021 and the budget summary is attached.

As we entered the second year of the pandemic in January 2021, the staff and board of Vermont Humanities set three straightforward goals for the year:

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 other staff working to promote the public humanities in Vermont.

These three goals are more relevant now, as the long-lasting impact of the pandemic continues to drive our daily work. With the Vermont Arts Council and other partners, we are leading the way in supporting the cultural sector and we have continued to innovate in our own programs, especially in the areas of early literacy, grantmaking, and our award-winning Vermont Reads one-book statewide reading program.

Covid-19 Pandemic Relief

As we noted in [our joint report to the community](#) on pandemic relief work in 2021, Vermont's cultural organizations are resilient and creative. These organizations have shown remarkable courage, often re-inventing their missions and business models overnight. Hundreds of venues face an uncertain future. They need assistance to manage the high cost of Covid-safe supplies, re-boot programs, re-engage their audiences, and devise new financial models to survive. The cultural sector is poised to help Vermont recover. These organizations drive the local economy, promote individual wellbeing, hold our history, and connect communities.

With the Vermont Arts Council we distributed \$1.2 million in Cultural Recovery Grants in 2021 to 146 arts and humanities organizations across Vermont with funding from the American Rescue Plan. These funds were distributed to organizations in all of Vermont's 14 counties, with an average grant of \$8,114. We funded 74% of the applications for these grants.

This work will continue to be a priority for Vermont Humanities and the Arts Council in 2022 and beyond. We urge you to [read the full report](#) posted on our website for additional information on our work to support the sector.

In addition, we are pleased to be supporting the Arts Council as both a member of the Vermont Creative Network and as a supporter of continuing Covid-19 relief and recovery efforts for the creative and cultural sector proposed in [H-624](#) and the companion bill [S-202](#).

Public Humanities and Literacy Programs

For our own cultural programming, how we tell the story of our statewide outreach is a little different today than it was before the pandemic. In 2021, 31,365 people took part in 562 activities hosted by us or by our community partners. 7,028 people attended in-person events, 13,660 watched live digital programs (most often on Zoom), and 10,677 streamed or downloaded events on platforms like YouTube, Vimeo, and Facebook.

In 2021 we continued to rely on Zoom-based programming for our early literacy, school-based, and public programs, although we did return to some in-person programming during the summer months. The numbers below represent the 2021 calendar year. The trendline for strong participation is good as we move into 2022.

First Wednesdays lectures: An estimated 6,471 people viewed the 47 public First Wednesdays talks we presented online from January to May 2021 in our winter/spring season. However, this is likely an undercount as more than one person often gathered around a single device. 2,202 people watched the events live on Zoom and the recorded talks collected 4,269 views on YouTube or Facebook. Attendance was higher than in past seasons and over 45% of the participants were new to the program in 2021. Although we hoped to return to in-person programming as we began our new fall season in October 2021, all but five of the 26 talks offered in the last three months of the year were held on Zoom. 1,063 people watched the 21 digital events online and 53 people attended the in-person talks at three sites. It seems clear that our audience continues to prefer safer Zoom events for the time being.

Our **Vermont Reads** program with Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give*, a young adult novel about the Black Lives Matter movement, was extended through June 30, 2021 due to the pandemic, culminating with a free public Zoom appearance by the acclaimed author on May 26 with 400 hundred people in attendance, followed by a "student only" conversation on Zoom the next day that reached at least 2,000 Vermont students across the state. An additional 200 people watched a recording of Thomas' public talk on Vimeo. The Vermont Department of Libraries partnered with us on their first reading and discussion program for Vermont State employees, using *The Hate U Give* with great success. Vermont Reads 2021 launched on July 1, 2021 with *We Contain Multitudes* by Sarah Henstra, a book about the lived experience of LGBTQ+ youth. We are partnering with Outright Vermont and other local social service organizations to promote this book around the state. Over 42 community programs have launched since we began work with the book in July.

Our **Speakers Bureau** enables libraries, historical societies, and other community organizations in all fourteen counties to offer free public programs that are high quality, convenient, well-publicized, and affordable. In 2021 3,471 people attended 83 Speakers Bureau events. Twenty-eight were held online, 53 were in-person, and two were hybrid.

Our popular **Reading and Discussion** programs are designed to strengthen communities and encourage lifelong learning and literacy. For over 40 years, they have offered libraries and other nonprofits a choice of over 75 themed series on myriad topics, both fiction and nonfiction. Vermont Humanities has a roster of 30 facilitators who lead dynamic, participatory discussions. In 2021, 727 people attended 68 Reading and Discussion groups in online, in-person, and hybrid settings.

Vermont Humanities officially affiliated with the Library of Congress' state Center for the Book program in 2021, merging longstanding early childhood programs at the previously independent Vermont Center for the Book with our own programs. Our **Early Childhood education trainings** for librarians and early educators teach best practices in early literacy education for children ages 0-5. We held seven pilot trainings across the state in 2021 completed by 91 unique participants. These pilot trainings supported the launch of new programming, including the Vermont Early Literacy Initiative in 2022, a cohort-based training program serving 10 rural libraries and their surrounding communities around the state.

In a difficult year for medical professionals, the **Literature and Medicine** book groups offered an outlet for pandemic stress relief and provided a sense of normalcy. Groups at three hospitals met regularly from January through May and September through December. The VA Hospital in White River Junction met five times virtually with 18 unique participants, the Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital met six times in-person and virtually with 35 unique participants, and the Rutland Regional Medical Center met six times virtually with 50 unique participants.

Veterans Book Groups create an opportunity for veterans to connect with each other, build relationships, read insightful materials, and share experiences. The group's explorations include books, poetry, articles, and short stories that foster camaraderie and a safe space to reflect, share ideas, and ask questions. Two groups met regularly in 2021. Northern Vermont University hosted a group for any person who has served or is serving in the armed forces as well as Gold Star Family members. The group met eight times both in-person and virtually in 2021 with 12 unique group members. Burlington Lakeside Veterans Clinic hosted a women's veterans book group which met seven times for the first half of the year starting off virtually and meeting outside in-person for the last two sessions. A total of 12 women participated. Both groups have launched a new series of meetings for 2022.

We sponsored 11 in-person **Humanities Camps** from June to August 2021 in Brattleboro, Burke, Canaan, East Corinth, Fair Haven, Richford, St. Albans, St. Johnsbury, West Rutland, Williamstown, and Windsor with an average attendance of 15 campers each day for a total of 165 students. These intensive, week-long, summer day camps engage young people with reading and the humanities. Five additional camps were presented by community partners including Outright Vermont, Get Thee to the Funnery, the Old Stone House Museum, Friends of Morrill Homestead, and the Blake Memorial Library.

For our **48th Annual Fall Conference** in 2021, we chose the theme, "*This Mazéd World: The Humanities and Climate Change*," using a line from Act II, Scene I of Shakespeare's "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" for the title. The title was inspired by young people at the summer "Get Thee to the Funnery" Shakespeare Camp who used the classic play to explore questions around climate justice. These students presented a keynote panel at the conference, which featured ten individual presentations throughout October. We offered nine free presentations on Zoom, including talks by nationally recognized figures such as author Bill McKibben (speaking about literature and climate change), NPR correspondent Eric Westervelt (describing his experience covering wildfires in the western United States), and Puerto Rican climate justice leader Elizabeth Yeampierre, who was recently named by *Apolitical* as one of "The World's Most Influential People in Climate Policy." Over 1,050 people viewed these talks as they were presented on Zoom or later as recordings on our YouTube channel, with almost 400 people viewing Bill McKibben's talk alone. The conference concluded with an in-person concert by the Fry Street Quartet held in partnership with the UVM Lane Series with 200 attendees.

Our newly created **Words in the Woods** program, a partnership with Vermont State Parks and the Vermont Arts Council, brings Vermont writers into state parks to share their craft. This program is designed to engage Vermonters by meeting them in the outdoors, where we can celebrate Vermont literature's historic and ongoing connection with the natural world. During the summer of 2021, we recorded two virtual readings and hosted one in-person event. Shanta Lee Gander visited Sweet Pond State Park in a recorded segment, Veranda Porche led a group at Knight Point State Park, and Sarah Audsley read her poetry in a presentation recorded at Taconic Mountains Ramble State Park. Due to Covid-19 concerns and inclement weather, we postponed the presentation by Abenaki singer-songwriter Bryan Blanchette until 2022.

In 2021, we have more than doubled our **Community Grants** budget to distribute additional funds to local communities engaging in public humanities projects. We funded 52 projects (including five Humanities Camp partners) with awards totaling \$169,000. In part, this increase is due to pandemic recovery efforts to support the cultural sector, but also because we strongly believe in providing resources for high-quality, diverse, public humanities programming across Vermont. Examples of grants in 2021 include:

Gedakina: One-Shelf Book Project: \$5000 to support a project that offers resources to educators with books about and by Indigenous peoples. One-Shelf Book Projects aid schools and teachers as they meet new Ethnic Studies requirements.

Clemmons Family Farm: Windows to A Multicultural World—Traveling While Black: \$5000 to support the development of curriculum for a project that will cover three specific areas of African-American history.

Blake Memorial Library: An Intergenerational Exploration of the Indigenous History, Culture, and Land Use of Topsham and Corinth: \$3400 to support the communities of Topsham and Corinth as they collectively explore the Indigenous history and culture of the area through an elementary summer camp, Abenaki artist and speaker events, and the development of a StoryWalk.

In an additional special initiative outside our regular grants program, Vermont Humanities partnered with diverse organizations and scholars to create the **Vermont Civics Collaborative**, a six-month project from January through June 2021 that looked at the immediate aftermath of the 2020 election and aimed to build understanding of and increase engagement in Vermont's civic life in towns across our state. We distributed seven grants to partner organizations: The Greater Burlington Multicultural Resource Center, Flow of History, Catamount Arts, Slow Democracy, Vermont Council on Rural Development, Center for Whole Communities, and Outright Vermont. All programs were virtual, and all but two of the programs were open to anyone who was interested. (Outright Vermont's programming was limited to LGBTQ+ youth and The Flow of History is a professional development program for primary and secondary school teachers.) The projects reached 2,555 people. This initiative led to a direct partnership with the Vermont Secretary of State's office to produce updated community resources for civics education that will be published later in 2022.

Internet-based and streaming resources became more important than ever in 2020 and 2021, as noted above in our reports about our First Wednesdays and Fall Conference programs. We also produced six new podcast episodes in 2021. Our joint ***Before Your Time*** podcast with the Vermont Historical Society garnered 1725 downloads for episodes about mail order and town meeting. And our ***Portable Humanist*** podcast featured experts such as State Librarian Jason Broughton, constitutional scholar Meg Mott, and anti-racist writer Tim Wise and earned 415 downloads over four episodes.

Vermont Humanities

January 2022-December 2022 Budget

INCOME

Annual	\$	200,000
Restricted Contributions	\$	200,000
Contributions/Support	\$	400,000
Federal Funding		
General Appropriation	\$	700,000
One-time Grants	\$	100,000
State Funding		
General Appropriation	\$	234,829
VT State Library/IMLS Grant	\$	50,000
Government Grants	\$	1,084,829
Program Service Fees	\$	70,000
Special events	\$	3,000
Investment and Endowment Drawdown	\$	60,000
Other Revenue	\$	63,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$	1,617,829

EXPENSES

Payroll & Benefits	\$	897,006
Professional development	\$	15,000
Mileage (Staff)	\$	10,000
Payroll	\$	922,006
Facilities	\$	19,500
Honoraria	\$	176,390
Limited PT Salaries	\$	53,800
Facilities & Food	\$	34,000
Staff, Scholar & LPT Reimbursable Expenses	\$	17,500
Participant Stipends	\$	14,400
Books	\$	79,160
Other Program Materials	\$	3,000
Postage & Shipping	\$	7,280
Grants & Awards	\$	107,600
Accessibility Services	\$	6,000
Program Expenses	\$	499,130
Communications/Development	\$	62,945
General & Admin	\$	114,248
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$	1,617,829
NET INCOME	\$	(0)