

Evaluation Report Executive Summary: Connecticut Humanities Grantmaking 2015 – 2018

The primary goal of the project was met within the proposed time frame... In achieving these macro-level project goals, the museum secures its future as an important, professionally validated arts and cultural organization, strengthening and increasing its credibility and value to funders, policy makers, community and peers.

- Connecticut Humanities Capacity Building Grant, Grantee

Submitted To:

Connecticut Humanities

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Introduction

Connecticut Humanities is a grantmaking organization and technical assistance provider. Through its efforts to support organizations that make history, literature, art, and other humanities disciplines accessible, relevant and interesting, the work of Connecticut Humanities and its grantees helps to build community, develop strong relationships, and cultivate civic pride. Connecticut Humanities works cooperatively with the CT Department of Economic and Community Development, the CT State Library, the CT State Department of Education, and the CT Secretary of the State, as enabled by the Connecticut General Assembly. State funding is matched by the National Endowment for the Humanities, corporations, and foundations.

HUMANITIES DEFINITION

The humanities are fields of learning that help us understand and appreciate human history, culture, values, and beliefs. They allow us to analyze our complex society and to make thoughtful, reasoned decisions based on inquiry, evaluation, and empathy.

As stated in its promotional materials, Connecticut Humanities has granted more than \$15.7 million to hundreds of organizations statewide, since it was founded in 1975. This support has been augmented by corporate and foundation grants and additional dollars and research from grantee organizations. Through its work and that of its partners and grantees, a total of \$57 million has been invested in quality humanities programming across Connecticut

In 2012, Connecticut Humanities modified its grantmaking strategies and priorities in an effort to streamline processes, attract and retain new grantee organizations, and ensure that all use of grant funds remained focused on the Humanities (see definition in box above). Connecticut Humanities also commissioned a two-part study of its grantmaking covering the three-year period FY 2012 – FY 2014, including a review of applications received and grants made, as well as a grantee survey to obtain direct feedback from recent Connecticut Humanities grantees (copies of reports from both projects are available upon request). During the four-year, FY 2015 through FY 2018, grant period (hereafter 2015-2018), Connecticut Humanities worked through multiple funding challenges connected to Connecticut state budget issues, but was able to maintain grantmaking and provision of technical assistance to its applicant/grantee community.

This grantmaking review was designed to determine the profile of recent grantee organizations, the types of grants administered and levels of support provided, and whether those had changed in comparison to the FY 2012 – FY 2014 grant period (hereafter 2012-2014). It was also designed to provide an update on how grantees use resources and what they accomplish. Key findings are summarized on the next two pages with detailed results following. Results are expected to inform new strategic directions for FY 2020 and beyond.

Humanities Fields

American Studies • Anthropology • American Studies • Anthropology • Archaeology • Area Studies • Art and Architectural History and Criticism • Cultural Studies • Economics • Ethics • Ethnic Studies including fields such as African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicano/Latino Studies, Native American Studies, etc. , • Folklore Geography • History • History and Ethics of Science and Technology • International Studies • Jurisprudence • Languages and Linguistics including both classical and modern languages • Literature both prose and poetry • Music History and Criticism • Philosophy • Political Science • Religion/Comparative Religion • Sociology • Theatre History and Criticism • Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies

Findings Summary

Review of Grant-Making

- During 2015-2018, Connecticut Humanities continued to maintain a robust portfolio of grantmaking. Across the 7 grantlines that were the focus of this report, more than \$2.1 million was awarded to 157 organizations to develop and deliver a wide variety of projects to convey humanities themes to public audiences. This represents approximately a 24% increase in total dollars granted **per year** as compared to the 2012-2014 study (on average \$440,815 was granted per year during 2012-2014, the equivalent of \$544,799 per year was granted between 2015-2018). This increase is in alignment with board priorities to ensure that substantial resources are re-granted.
- As was true of 2012-2014, Connecticut Humanities awarded grants 2015-2018 to organizations located throughout the state with varying profiles including organizations with both larger and quite small annual budgets and different missions. Many of these organizations (51% of all organizations that applied and 43% of the grantees) had not applied for funding during 2012- 2014. During 2015-2018 and, as was also the case for 2012-2014, multiple organizations requested and were awarded grants from more than one grantline. This is also in alignment with board priorities.
- Connecticut Humanities received proposals from different types of organizations including those identified as Art Museums (3%), Arts Organizations (19%), Educational Organizations (8%), Libraries (15%), History Organizations/Museums or Societies (37%) and other nonprofits (18%). This distribution of organizational types for 2015-2018 was very similar to the 2012 – 2014 period. The types of organizations that were awarded grants was very similar across the two periods.
- Substantial proportions (64%) of all grant requests were awarded and most organizations (72%) that applied received at least one grant during 2015-2018. Almost all StEPs-CT Grant requests, (95%.) were funded as well as six of seven 1818 Grant request (86%), and all seven Connecticut at Work Grants (2015 only). A total of 9 of 14 Capacity Building Grants (64%), 63% of all Quick Grant requests, 65% of all Planning Grant requests and 51 of 107 Implementation Grant requests (48%) were funded.
- As in 2012-2014, most grants awarded were funded in full. All Capacity Building and Connecticut at Work Grants that were accepted were fully funded and this was also true for all but one of the 1818 Grants, and 94% of the StEPs-CT Grants. More than two-thirds of all Quick Grants (71%) were fully funded as were about half of the larger Planning (54%) and Implementation (45%) Grants.
- About one-quarter of the grantees (24%) obtained grants for amounts between \$100 and \$1500, almost half (43%) obtained grants for amounts between \$1501 and \$9,999 and 52 grantees (33%) obtained grants for \$10,000 or more. This represents a definite shift: during the 2012-2014 grant period, only 20% of grantees obtained grants at the highest level.¹
- Similar to 2012-2014, there were grantees of different organizational types and in each budget size category that obtained each of the types of grants, and there were some disparities. But unlike the prior grant period, the disparities were most pronounced by budget size, not organizational type. Grantees with larger budgets disproportionately

¹ Note that the ceiling for Quick Grants changed from \$1,500 to \$4,999 starting July 2015.

obtained the larger Implementation Grants (those obtaining Quick Grants were completely representative). The differences may continue to signify that grantees are able to find the right grant options for their needs and capacity, that there continues to be needed flexibility within the grantlines, and that there is an ongoing need to review any disparities in grant acquisition.

Review of Selected Grantee Final Reports (2 from each grant line)

The Project Narrative reports ask grantees to answer a series of questions that provide an update on how grant funds were spent and what was accomplished. These reports are brief, but they cover multiple key elements of grantee work. They serve to provide final documentation about challenges and accomplishments of the projects for both Connecticut Humanities and the grantees which can further inform future grantmaking and project development decisions. Each report is carefully reviewed by the Manager of Grants and Programs and requests for additional details are made if needed. The report structure (7 – 10 open-ended questions) facilitates individual reporting by grantees in accordance with grant size/complexity, as well as comparison of overall results by grantline. Review of eight randomly selected reports highlighted project results; all included summaries of positive project outcomes. The selected reports, especially the Capacity Building, Public Presentation: Planning and Public Presentation: Implementation reports featured many details and insights about the selected projects. The reports guide reflection on accomplishments and encourage grantees to assess challenges too, and as such they are useful to both Connecticut Humanities and the grantees. More details, especially regarding any project difficulties would further enhance reporting usefulness.

Issues for Further Consideration and Suggested Action Steps

- Connecticut Humanities is strongly encouraged to carefully review this report and share findings with key stakeholders, specifically to determine whether grantmaking volume and grantee diversity is sufficient.
- The differences in grant access may signify that grantees continue to be able to find the right grant options for their potential and that there is needed flexibility within the grantlines. The diversity within grantlines may also suggest that there is ongoing disparity regarding grant acquisition that should remain the subject for continued review. Despite disparities, both smaller and larger organizations, and multiples types of organizations acquired grants in each grantline.
- Review of final reports highlighted possible areas to strengthen:
 - ▶ Encouraging the incorporation of additional details in the reports as needed: such as attachments of basic counts and descriptions of program visitors/participants, and clarification of at least one way that the grantee assessed project success or participant benefits. Strive for concrete versus abstract findings.
 - ▶ Brainstorming and reporting about how to address areas of projects that fall short of expectations. Consider using a close-ended item asking grantees to rate the level of difficulty they experienced with common program challenges such as staffing or space problems, smaller audience than desired, more time needed for planning or initiation.
- Review of project titles and a small sample of randomly selected reports showed that requirements have resulted in multiple projects operating to convey important humanities themes. Attention to this accomplishment should always be continued.