

Post-Incarceration Humanities Partnership

Updated November 1, 2023

Grant Guidelines

Humanities New York is proud to offer an annual partnership grant opportunity for New York State-based, tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations that currently serve individuals who are undergoing the process of societal reentry after a period of incarceration and/or the families of those individuals. Organizations that have an established record of working on issues of prison reform or abolition are also eligible. Any project funded by the Post-Incarceration Humanities Partnership (PIHP) must incorporate humanities methodologies and be in alignment with HNY's mission of dialogue, reflection, and critical thinking.

Awards range from \$15,000 to \$25,000 for implementation in 2024. Both new or established projects will be considered. The size of the grant award will be based on the scope of the project. Proposals must use the budget template to articulate the use of the proposed funding, as well as explain in the project narrative how working with the tools of public humanities will benefit the applicant's ongoing work. Substantive engagement with the humanities will be a necessary component of successful applications. Organizations that employ the formerly incarcerated are strongly encouraged to apply.

Rationale

The United States has an incarcerated population of approximately 2.3 million people, which, according to the Center for Court Innovation's Greg Berman and Julian Adler, is a 500 percent increase in the incarceration rate of 40 years ago. Research issued by Cornell University indicates that such a percentage increase means that nearly one in two adults in the United States has experienced the incarceration of a family member. Today, about 6.5 million people have an immediate family member who is in prison. On a local level, the Prison Policy Initiative states 49,000 New Yorkers are currently behind bars—the impact of which ripples through the lives of their families and communities. These numbers illustrate how better assistance for all people who are impacted by our justice system is required if we are to sustain civil society and the great promise of democracy in the United States.

Democratic society requires participation grounded in civic trust. While it may be complicated to establish trust with someone whose life experience differs from your own, this is where HNY believes the humanities can help. The humanities foster a sense of both personal and community empowerment by creating spaces for exchange where trust can grow.

While dynamic education programs exist for individuals in prison, what about programming for the formerly incarcerated who are striving to rebuild their relationships within society beyond the prison walls? The social stigma of incarceration extends beyond the individual who has served

time. Incarceration impacts not only this person's life story but also deeply transforms lived experience within their communities. Indeed both those communities that have personal knowledge of incarceration and those who know of it from a distance are affected. As James Baldwin wrote: "No one, after all, can be liked whose human weight and complexity cannot be, or has not been, admitted to." What if the humanities were employed to support these individuals and transmit their stories, along with those of their families, so that their defining life attribute is not their incarceration?

HNY uses the tools of the humanities to foster engaged inquiry around social and cultural concerns. The most essential of these tools is open, frank, and substantive dialogue about the hopes, anxieties, and obstacles that unite or divide us. Engaged inquiry is a pillar of informal democracy that strengthens society. This type of conversation—structured and informed yet nimble enough to respond to the opinions and experiences of participants—is a hallmark of the public humanities. There is an urgent need to move from distrust into trust. Otherwise, democracy will not flourish.

Program Description & Goals

"What does it mean to live in the context in which society places us?" HNY's programming consistently strives to answer this query, and the Post-Incarceration Humanities Partnership seeks partner organizations that are interested in applying this form of inquiry—and the questions and reflections that stem from it—to the context of post-incarceration. PIHP funds organizations that are authentically aware of both the human cost of time spent in the prison system and how prison experiences can hobble the natural human flourishing of the mind and spirit that should be accessible to all.

Beyond proposing projects that meet the criteria of the grant guidelines, HNY seeks organizations that are ready to actively participate in this second iteration of this annual program. Organizations chosen for the 2024 PIHP cohort will articulate together their concrete aims for the year and make use of both HNY program materials as well as their own, shared knowledge and resources to successfully accomplish these goals. HNY will be a collaborative partner in the funded projects, sharing its staff expertise and program materials and design in order to work side by side with our grantee organizations. Applicants should examine HNY's Community Conversations and Reading & Discussion programs as examples of the tools and the type of experience we bring to a collaboration.

At its heart, HNY's work is about creating and holding space for dialogue and the discussion of experiences, both shared and alien, of the people who are participating in the group. HNY is distinguished by its adherence to a public humanities ethos: we use texts as prompts and grounding points for the exploration of and dialogue about the program participants' lives. It is this conjunction—facilitating a dialogue—that we see as our contribution, however informal, to the development and expansion of American democracy. HNY also believes these informal humanities-based dialogues are needed in the post-incarceration community. HNY knows stories are the best way to dismantle walls and destroy prejudices—stories told across a table or

in a shared room that build community around the frustrations, beauty, and hopes that animate all of our lives.

Put succinctly: we seek proposals that explain how Humanities New York can assist, through our funding and our expertise in facilitating dialogue, in revealing and overcoming the obstacles those served by our applicants are confronting. HNY staff will support partner organizations, and will host convening for cross-fertilization and discussion among the grant cohort of 16 to 18 organizations.

What We Fund

Historically and generally, HNY supports projects that activate, frame, or deepen our understanding of what it means to be human. We encourage and support innovative approaches in the design and delivery of public-facing programming.

For this opportunity we encourage applications from organizations that serve individuals and families who are undergoing the process of reentry and reintegration into society following a period of incarceration. Successful projects will integrate HNY's public humanities work—particularly, facilitated dialogue and conversation programming—into their final product. Receiving a Post-Incarceration Humanities Partnership Grant precludes organizations from applying for other HNY grant opportunities (Vision, Action, and Quick grants), as HNY encourages awardees to concentrate exclusively on their work with the cohort.

Eligibility

Any tax-exempt organization that is based in and serves New York State may apply. HNY does not fund individuals. Competitive applications for this opportunity will be submitted by organizations that have an established record of success serving populations dealing with issues of incarceration, post-incarceration reentry, or prison reform. This grant is intended for implementation or expansion work, not for planning. For this opportunity, we are particularly interested in receiving applications from mid-sized organizations (annual budgets between \$250,000-\$1m) that possess an established record of work and activities, and are seeking assistance in expanding their capacity to fulfill their mission and get to their next level. Successful projects will integrate public humanities approaches—particularly HNY's facilitated dialogue and conversation programming—into their final products.

All applications must include at least one member with humanities expertise. This may be someone with an advanced degree in a humanities field, a local history expert, or a culture bearer. The application should demonstrate how their expertise will contribute to the project.

As stated above, HNY especially encourages applications from organizations that employ the formerly incarcerated.

This grant opportunity requires cost-sharing of at least 50% of the value of the award. The grant request may be matched by any combination of cash and in-kind contributions. Staff time, volunteer time, and donated venue space may count as sources of cost-share. Matching funds

demonstrate commitment to a project and help HNY meet state and federal reporting requirements.

Each application must include a project budget completed on the HNY budget template (link available in the application). The budget should demonstrate how the grant request will be allocated, as well as any cash or in-kind cost share.

Use of Grant Funds

Applicants may request support for any necessary costs for the proposed scope of work, including participant honoraria, staff time, consultants, travel, marketing, evaluation, and photography/videography. Costs of travel on non-U.S. (international) air carriers and costs of alcohol may not be included in the request.

Fiscal Officer: If awarded, grantees must designate a Fiscal Officer who will manage the grant funds. This individual must be an employee or board member of the awarded organization and be familiar with accounting practices. The Fiscal Officer may not be the same person as the Project Director.

Contact Information

Please contact Joe Murphy, HNY Director of Grant-Making, at pihp@humanitiesny.org with any questions or to discuss potential applications.

Humanities New York is grateful to the Mellon Foundation for recognizing the importance of this work and for generously supporting it.