On Wisdom and Vision:
Humanities Organizations in Illinois During COVID-19

MARCH 2021

ILLINOIS HUMANITIES
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On wisdom and vision: humanities organizations in Illinois during COVID-19

Overview

The 177 nonprofit public humanities grantee partners featured in On Wisdom and Vision: Humanities Organizations in Illinois During COVID-19, have been profoundly impacted by COVID-19 operationally and programmatically. This group lost an estimated $9,742,000 in revenue in 2020 and 14% report fearing permanent closure. These organizations suffered significant audience loss, reaching 1,700,000 fewer people than they originally anticipated serving during 2020.

At this historic moment – when Illinois is reeling from the impacts of the pandemic, a racial reckoning, and economic devastation – the role of public humanities organizations is both urgent and profound.

Analysis of Illinois Humanities’ COVID-19 relief grantmaking of $710,000, funded primarily by the National Endowment for the Humanities through the federal CARES Act, to 177 nonprofit public humanities organizations across the state, provides a snapshot of the impacts of COVID-19 and a window onto the ways in which organizations are mitigating the effects of the pandemic within their communities and across the state.

Report findings describe a public humanities ecosystem populated by diverse organizations working locally in ways that have heightened relevance during – and post – pandemic. Many grantee partners are operating in areas in which households struggle to make ends meet, and in which COVID-19 has had a devastating (and disproportionate) impact. Given the role these organizations are playing – and in some cases have played for more than a century – there is a clear need to better support this sector, bring more visibility to its work and impact, and to invest in these organizations as community anchors which foster economic opportunity and build community resilience.

About public humanities organizations in Illinois

Humanities are necessary for democracy and for enabling us to imagine what we want in our society. Research shows public humanities organizations provide the kinds of experiences which enable participants to be “more likely to engage in civic life, and more likely to hold aspirations for improving the common good.” Furthermore, public humanities organizations drive significant revenue, particularly in Illinois.

Every county in Illinois has a
humanities organization and cultural assets; many are invisible to the funding and policy community. Rural communities, in particular, have historically received less visibility and funding in relation to their metro peers.

**COVID-19 relief funding for the humanities in Illinois**

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) received $75 million in supplemental funding to assist cultural institutions and humanists affected by COVID-19 as part of the $2.2 trillion CARES Act economic stabilization plan; 40% of the appropriation ($30 million) was directed to the 56 state and jurisdictional councils, based upon NEH’s standard population formula. As the state affiliate for the NEH, Illinois Humanities was tasked with distributing CARES Act relief funds and supplemented these dollars with money repurposed from general operations and dollars raised from private donors specifically for COVID-19 relief.

Illinois Humanities COVID-19 Emergency Relief Grants were available in three rounds between April and June, 2020. Organizations with budgets of up to $1.5 million were eligible to apply for multiple grants.

- General Operating Grants awarded $520,000 to 154 organizations for general operations including rent, payroll, utilities, etc;

- Program Innovation and Adaptation Grants totaling $100,000 enabled 20 organizations to innovate, adapt, and increase access to their programming; and

- Community Resilience grants awarded $90,000 to 15 organizations to make

The 177 grant organizations are located throughout Illinois. Many are found in population centers such as Chicago, Rockford, and Peoria. Others are in small and rural communities such as Shawneetown, Greenup, Rushville, Ipava, Utica, Bishop Hill, and Savanna.
community experiences during the pandemic visible and highlight local resiliency.

Relief grants served as singular opportunities for many organizations that were unable or ineligible to apply for other sources of federal, state or private philanthropic support due to size, location, or capacity.

“In the middle of April, we were notified we received the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Grant,” said Erin Eveland, executive director of The HUB - Arts and Cultural Center, in Rushville.

“The knowledge that we had some relief funds coming gave us the ability to move out of survival mode and become creative again.

“Because of the funds... we were able to focus on what our community needed and how we could best serve them.”

Distribution of grant funds

Illinois Humanities COVID-19 relief grant funding patterns follow the state’s population distribution. Grantee partners from Cook County received the largest proportion of grant dollars. However, when analyzed against funding-per-resident, counties with the largest dollars-per-resident figures tended to be less-densely populated counties (i.e. counties with fewer than 10,000 residents) such as Scott, Gallatin, Stark, Putnam, and Schuyler counties.

The vast majority of grantee partners have budgets well under the eligibility requirements of the Illinois Humanities COVID-19 relief funds: half of the grantee partners have annual budgets of less than $100,000 and 82% have annual budgets of less than a half a million dollars. Given that COVID-19 relief grants ranged from $2,500 to $7,500, it is notable that for two out of three recipients, grant awards represented more than 5% of their annual budgets; thirty two organizations received total grant dollars representing more than 10% of their annual budgets and 10 organizations received grants representing more than a quarter of their entire annual budget. These relatively “small” dollars had a significant impact.

Grantee partner contexts

Report analysis found that when public humanities organizations in Illinois are mapped against demographic, geographic, and pandemic contexts, it becomes clear that humanities organizations are situated in communities that were under significant economic duress prior to the pandemic, and more than a third of grantees are located in places that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Two thirds of the 177 grantees are located in zip codes where more than 35% of households struggle to afford basic needs and 29% are located in communities where the majority of households are experiencing poverty. Given the preponderance of grantee partners located in zip codes experiencing high levels of poverty, it may not be surprising that 38% of grantees are located in zip codes with more COVID-19 cases than the statewide average.

Grantee partner experiences

Grantee partners undertook activities that support stronger and more equitable communities including hiring humanists and artists, creating jobs, offering trainings, documenting and amplifying cultural identity and community narratives, reframing their roles in terms of why their missions matter, engaging communities in making, storytelling, and
creative expression, and using spaces in new ways.

By being extremely flexible, adaptable, and promoting inclusivity, grantees pivoted in-person programs to new media and modes of service, relieved isolation and enlivened communities, and resisted layoffs and staff reductions. They documented and amplified cultural identity and community narratives, engaged communities in creating, storytelling and creative expression and, in some cases, found new ways to understand why their work – and their missions – matter.

“We believe that these are historic times, our museum has a responsibility in helping our community members heal from the social disruption and stay connected to one another,” said Sue Scott, director of the Western Illinois Museum, located in Macomb.

Illinois Humanities’ COVID-19 relief grantee partners’ experiences align with what we know about how humanities organizations respond during times of crisis. Grantee partners are serving as community anchors for trusted information, for mitigating social isolation, for enabling people to make and create objects and narratives that help them to process loss, trauma, and joy. They are also – while under significant duress – finding ways to incorporate new technologies and new modes for delivering on their missions.

Experiences described by grantee partners strongly align with national and international research about the role and experiences of public humanities organizations during COVID-19 specifically, and in times of severe crises in general. Illinois public humanities organizations – like their national peers:

- Are looking for ways to work differently and in less isolation;
- Are excited about, and anticipate, opportunities for organizational transformation – particularly in terms of new modes of engagement and new audiences;
- Expect and want to give more attention to equity and inclusion;
- Have a strong desire to network and connect with peers through meet ups, trainings, and peer-skill-shares; and
- Believe there is real value in developing a shared language and understanding of the overall landscape of humanities organizations.

**Recommendations**

Illinois Humanities is working to understand and learn from the intensive experience of this past year. The recommendations that follow are rooted in the reported experiences of grantee partners, research about the role of public humanities organizations in fostering social cohesion, well-being and community resilience, and analysis of grantee partners’ geographic, demographic, and pandemic contexts.

**For Illinois Humanities**

Our recommendations for ourselves at this time include:
• Increase our capacity to support peer-to-peer learning, technical assistance, and partnership infrastructure statewide;

• Look at the ways in which an equity lens, paired with data, can help inform grantmaking priorities; and

• Evaluate the possibility of creating and maintaining a public directory of Illinois humanities organizations to bolster a community of practice and to help cross-sector stakeholders connect with local and statewide organizations.

**For funders**

• Increase capacity to support peer-to-peer learning, technical assistance, and support partnership infrastructure across our grantee partners and statewide partners;

• Look at the ways in which an equity lens, paired with data, can help inform grantmaking priorities;

• Invest in strengthening organizations’ abilities to reflect local interests and identities and to participate in communities of practice and professional networks;

• Invest in organizations’ ability to create, curate, and leverage digital and virtual content;

• Consider what proportion of dollars support organizations serving rural communities; and

• Of special note: relatively small grants ($2,500-$7,500) can have transformative impacts for small organizations, especially when they are in areas overlooked or underfunded by philanthropy traditionally.

**For policy makers**

• Include representatives from public humanities organizations in the development and implementation of public health and community development strategies;

• Promote, deploy, network, and hire humanists in recovery planning at the local, regional, and statewide level;

• Quantify and communicate regularly about the economic impact of public humanities organizations, particularly from rural areas; and

• Integrate and include humanities organizations in public/private partnerships involving philanthropy and private investors.

**Conclusion**

Recipients of COVID-19 relief grants are providing space, structure, and programming necessary to foster social cohesion. They enable people to become closer to one another, develop a better understanding of the places in which they live, and to create and share narratives about their experiences. Public humanities organizations have something substantial to offer during this pandemic and, as well, throughout the course of our recovery.

Overlooking this sector runs the risk of both losing community anchors most committed to preserving the artifacts, ephemera, and memory of Illinois’ history and identity, as well as failing to capitalize on an ecosystem ripe to contribute to the state’s ability to repair and heal the triple pandemics of COVID-19, racial reckoning, and disinvestment across rural and urban communities.
Attempts to “build back better” without these organizations at the table may leave Illinois bereft of the critical elements we need required to carry us into our post-COVID-19 state.

**Illinois Humanities’ COVID-19 relief grants were made possible** by funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities through the federal CARES Act and the generosity of individual donors who contributed during Illinois Humanities’ 2020 Public Humanities Awards.


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**About Illinois Humanities**

Illinois Humanities, the Illinois affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, is a statewide nonprofit organization that activates the humanities through free public programs, grants, and educational opportunities that foster reflection, spark conversation, build community, and strengthen civic engagement. We provide free, high-quality humanities experiences throughout Illinois, particularly for communities of color, individuals living on low incomes, counties and towns in rural areas, small arts and cultural organizations, and communities highly impacted by mass incarceration. Learn more at [ilhumanities.org](http://ilhumanities.org) and on [Facebook](http://facebook), [Twitter](http://twitter), [Instagram](http://instagram) and [LinkedIn](http://linkedin) @ILHumanities.

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Full report is available at [ilhumanities.org/covid19report](http://ilhumanities.org/covid19report)
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In the past year, we have witnessed the inequities of our society writ large in the devastating impacts of COVID-19. And we have known for some time that social isolation enables polarization and disunion.

But we also know the power public spaces have to mitigate social isolation and to bolster well-being. We appreciate that coffee shops, bookstores, and hair salons can serve as the proverbial “hearts” of a community. Libraries function as “palaces for the people.” Individuals, responding to disasters create “paradises in hell.” It does not require a far stretch of the imagination to consider the possibility that public humanities organizations which, by design, foster community, inspire reflection and provide context, may have something substantial to offer during this pandemic and, as well, throughout the course of our recovery. In fact, it may be that attempts to “build back better” without these organizations at the table will deprive us of the very materials necessary to carry us into our post-COVID-19 state.

In the report that follows, we encourage readers to consider not only the creativity and resourcefulness Illinois humanities organizations have brought in their responses to COVID-19, but also the ways in which they uniquely equip Illinois to forge a better future for us all.

Gabrielle Lyon, Executive Director

Mae Hong, Board Chair
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What if paradise flashed up among us from time to time – at the worst of times? What if we glimpsed it in the jaws of hell? These flashes give us... a glimpse of who else we ourselves may be and what else our society could become.

– Rebecca Solnit, A Paradise Built in Hell

The arts and the humanities belong to all the people of the United States... An advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone, but must give full value and support to the other great branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future... Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens...

– National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-209)
Introduction

As of March 2, 2021, there have been 1,189,416 total confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Illinois and 20,583 people have died from the virus. The virulently disproportionate impact of the virus on Black communities and communities of color across the state has highlighted racial health disparities into stark relief.

The 177 nonprofit public humanities grantee partners featured in On Wisdom and Vision: Humanities Organizations in Illinois During COVID-19, have been profoundly impacted by COVID-19 operationally and programmatically. This group lost an estimated $9,742,000 in revenue in 2020 and 14% report fearing permanent closure. These organizations suffered significant audience loss, reaching 1,700,000 fewer people than they originally anticipated serving during 2020. At this historic moment - when Illinois is reeling from the impacts of the pandemic, a racial reckoning, and economic devastation - the role of public humanities organizations is both urgent and profound.

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) was established in 1965 as sustenance for a democracy “that demands wisdom and vision in its citizens.” Public humanities give participants the opportunity to think about what things mean – and why they’re significant – with other people. The ethical thinking, the social change possibilities, and the variety of perspectives that emerge enable the wisdom and vision that underpin the mechanics of democracy. Cultural traditions, artistic and humanistic inquiry, and community narratives provide the threads required to strengthen civic fabric.

Illinois Humanities’ crisis-relief grantmaking of $710,000 (funded primarily by federal CARES Act funding) to 177 organizations across the state provides both a snapshot of the ways in which humanities organizations have been impacted by COVID-19 as well as a window into the ways in which these organizations mitigate the effects of the pandemic within their communities and across the state.

By being extremely flexible and adaptable, and promoting inclusivity, grantee partners pivoted in-person programs to new media and modes of service, relieved isolation and enlivened communities, and resisted layoffs and staff reductions. They also documented and amplified cultural identity and community narratives, engaged communities in storytelling and creative expression and, in some cases, found new ways to understand why their work – and their missions – matter.

Who this report is for

The goal of this report is to render the presence, contribution, and impact of Illinois humanities organizations more visible, and to illuminate the abilities of these organizations to increase community resilience, well-being, and equity.

This report is developed with cross-sector stakeholders in mind, namely:

- nonprofit humanities and cultural organizations interested in understanding how their work fits into a broader ecosystem within Illinois
- funders and philanthropists who are weighing the ways in which investments in the humanities, arts, and culture intersect and are impactful
- policy makers and planners involved in developing approaches to enable strong, equitable recovery from the pandemic
What are the humanities and why do public humanities matter?

Encyclopedia Britannica defines the humanities as “branches of knowledge that concern themselves with human beings and their culture or with analytic and critical methods of inquiry derived from an appreciation of human values and of the unique ability of the human spirit to express itself.”

The humanities are the examination of what it means to be human through the interpretation and discussion of all forms of thought and expression.

Humanities disciplines include history, literature, language, ethics, anthropology and archaeology, folklore, human geography, law, politics, religion, philosophy, and the interpretation of the arts.

How do public humanities manifest in our day-to-day lives? Adults reading for pleasure find an improved sense of community and cultural understanding. Tourists travel to historical sites and monuments for important family and personal trips. Viewing and talking about art, artifacts and monuments fosters observation skills and the opportunity for people to connect with history, culture, and each other. Understanding the past offers avenues for people to make sense of contemporary issues and events as complex, multifaceted and ever-changing. Persuasive written and oral communication, creative problem solving, teamwork, decision making, and critical analysis are skills developed by the humanities and actively sought by employers. Public humanities spaces provide structure for gathering and meaning-making. Public humanities programs, in particular, create opportunities for citizens to think about why things matter, provide tools for conversation, and allow processes for giving and receiving feedback.

There is a close connection between experiences with the humanities and civic engagement. Because public humanities emphasize curiosity, questioning, and dialogue, they offer a mode of inquiry and conversation that enables participants to engage, support, or challenge the ideals, beliefs, tensions, and prejudices of the communities in which they live.

“[Humanities] are about understanding how different and even opposed avenues may converge towards single common results, and this is precisely the issue currently at stake in the planet: how can different interests, when considered from the point of view of economy or society, converge?”

Humanities organizations contend against social isolation

To ensure the safety of communities due to COVID-19, it was necessary to cancel events and festivals and to close museums and heritage sites. While necessary, these actions erode
social cohesion and reinforce isolation. Isolation obstructs the kinds of gathering and exchange required for civic engagement.

“Social exclusion” and “social isolation” occur when there is a lack of access to the kinds of opportunities, connections, and resources available to the majority.7 Research into the disparate community impact of the heatwave of 1995 in Chicago (which led to the deaths of more than 700 people) exposed that even within neighborhoods with similar racial and economic demographics, “shoddy social infrastructure discouraged interaction and impeded mutual support.”8 Humanities organizations, through local and place-based programs, help mitigate social isolation by illuminating lived experiences of those who have been unseen, unheard, or not understood by neighbors or society.

**Humanities organizations foster public health**

Beyond building social cohesion, public health research into the effects of engagement in cultural and arts activities demonstrates enhanced immune responses, a sense of well-being, increased community capacity, and increased abilities to communicate within and across communities and mobilize social change. Humanities organizations are well-versed in addressing some of the biggest challenges currently facing public health: creating social connection and communicating across differences during a pandemic. In some cases, these organizations are also supporting the transformation of social movements and culture change. When organizations provide access to the humanities they are, by correlation, in a position to help individuals cope with distress and support well-being during recovery.

Developed pre-COVID-19, “Creating Healthy Communities Through Cross-Sector Collaboration,” presents a case for how collaboration between public health, arts and culture, and community development sectors is critical to addressing the issues and conditions that limit health in America. The work calls for “increased recognition of community assets such as knowledge, resilience, power, art, culture and lived experience,” asserting “community knowledge and community assets must be placed at the center of advancing health and health equity.”9

**The humanities and crises**

Communities with higher social infrastructure are more resilient, recover faster, and are better able to secure necessary resources. In 2018, the World Bank Group, evaluating the impact of cultural organizations in times of disaster and crises around the globe, called for “a culture-based approach for city reconstruction and recovery in post-crisis situations.”10 Although COVID-19 is a first-of-its-kind experience in this century in Illinois, the role of humanities organizations in aiding in resilience and recovery from natural disasters and public health emergencies around the world offers important trends to learn from.

In times of crisis, humanities organizations provide:

- Social cohesion, which is critical to ‘bouncing back’
- A shared sense of unity and identity
- Well-being through social engagement, enjoyment, and meaning-making
- Modes and media that support conversations about individual and group behavior, including behaviors that impact public health
• Inclusive dialogue that can incorporate diverse cultural expressions and cultural heritage

• A sense of ownership during conversations about recovery

**Humanities organizations generate revenue**

Contrary to a general assumption that nonprofit humanities organizations are “needy charities,” humanities organizations are not cost centers in the state’s economy. The opposite is true: decades of economic data at the local, state and national level show that the arts and culture sector is a major contributor to the economy. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reported in 2017 that arts and cultural production accounts for $30,348,386,960 and 3.7% of the Illinois economy, contributing 224,102 jobs.11

**The state of humanities organizations in Illinois**

Throughout this pandemic, humanities organizations have endured as community anchors continuing their work and, in some cases, transforming it. The investment of $710,000 in 177 organizations has been meager in contrast to the estimated loss of revenue. But the pandemic has also given us an opportunity to re-evaluate the role, responsibility, and possibility these local places hold. The following chapter, "In a Year of Duress,” powerfully illustrates, the ways in which humanities organizations are critical for providing relief, restoration, and community well being. Extensive research undertaken by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences indicates,

> **“Communities need more than fresh asphalt to thrive; they need a robust cultural infrastructure that strengthens social bonds... and gives individuals the means and knowledge to develop their own cultural resources.”**

They can have an enormous payoff that transforms access to culture, opportunity, and economic development.”

Particularly in the time of COVID-19, the “cultural infrastructure” humanities organizations provide reduces isolation, builds resilience and, perhaps, holds critical keys to recovery. This value predates the pandemic and will be critical for an equitable recovery.
CHAPTER 2

In a year of duress, local humanities groups rise to meet the occasion

Illinois does not forget it beats. A heart, a muscle, a fulcrum For blood that runs deep, thrums In this state, this land of former Factories shuttered and farms That keep marching, moving Into relentless seasons, moon Cycles. Illinois, you persist.

– Poet Tara Betts (excerpt from “Illinois Bicentennial Poem”)
On March 16, 2020, things looked pretty dire for Contratiempo, an alternative space where the Latin American and immigrant literary, political, artistic, and academic scenes in Chicago connect with the migrant community in the city, across the U.S. and even in Latin America. Based in Pilsen and founded in 2004, the volunteer-driven organization, whose flagship program has been the quarterly magazine bearing its name, had lost funding for its summer programs and its participation in a San Antonio writers conference, as well as its “Poesía en Abril” festival. Staff continued to produce its radio programming from home, because Co-Prosperity Sphere, where Lumpen Radio has its studio, had to close due to the pandemic, and it was unknown when the print magazine would be published again.

At the same time, about 245 miles, or a four-hour drive, to the south and west, Western Illinois Museum (WIM) was seeing plans for an ambitious year quickly fall apart. The museum is based in Macomb, a community with a population of 20,000 located just south of the La Moine River and serves as the county seat of McDonough County. WIM considered 2020 as critical to a three-year expansion strategy and had planned a total of seventy four programs with the goal of increasing audience and revenue. But when the Museum, whose mission is to nurture “our history and culture,” closed due to COVID-19, sixteen programs were canceled outright and other plans put on hold.

Another 252 miles south of Macomb, the African American Museum of Southern Illinois (AAMSI), whose mission is to identify, preserve and portray the outstanding achievements of African American citizens, was facing an equally daunting crisis. Located in the city of Carbondale and in Jackson County in a region sometimes informally known as “Little Egypt,” the Museum lost funding, as well as the ability to carry out an annual fundraising event. Along with this scheduled event went AAMSI’s exhibition tours, reading spaces, collections, and community programs, as well as multiple planned collaborations.

In theory, all three groups – facing such daunting disruption – might have taken a hiatus. In some ways, it might have been a good time for a break to reassess their situations. But that was not in the cards.

Inspired by its longtime connection to immigrant thinkers, academics, artists and activists, and aware of its unique position to connect and inspire during the pandemic, Contratiempo embarked on what executive director Moira Pujols describes as an ‘enormously motivating creative journey.’ With all in-person public events and meetings canceled, Contratiempo figured out how to migrate all of its programming to the digital world. Its print contributors began to produce podcast ‘capsules’ on poetry, books and cinema, under the guidance of radio producer Stephanie Manriquez. “Radio is a natural for our Latinx audience,’ says Pujols. “Hearing our voices tell stories places us in a vulnerable position, closer to them.”

In Macomb, WIM director Sue Scott launched a #COVIDMemory project, where area residents could upload their written testimonials as well as audio and visuals depicting how the pandemic was affecting their lives. In addition, Scott (who describes WIM as a “participatory” museum, meaning that exhibits and programs are tools to create an authentic social connection), began to post video content for the community. The
In short order, all three bounced back from a devastating early 2020 and pivoted in remarkable ways. And they weren’t alone – all across Illinois’ 58,000 square miles and 102 counties, community-based cultural groups adapted in response to the challenges presented by COVID-19.

With many shuttered from in-person programming due to the lockdown, and most scheduled fundraising efforts curtailed and corporate support largely suspended for the time being, groups were initially at a loss for how to respond. But armed with grit, imagination, and resourcefulness, many community-based cultural groups threw caution to the wind by creating digital content, supporting local responses to the pandemic, and making appeals to local individual donors, many of whom responded in unprecedented ways.

When, in mid-March 2020, Illinois Humanities saw a lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was imminent, it launched an initial grants response through repurposed general operating dollars. With the additional support of funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) through the CARES Act, Illinois Humanities COVID-19 Emergency relief grants provided 189 awards totaling $710,000 to 177 humanities and cultural nonprofit organizations between March and July 2020. The bulk of funds were distributed as General Operating relief grants ($520,000) to humanities organizations throughout Illinois with budgets of $1.5 million or less. Twenty Project Innovation & Adaptation grants ($100,000) supported efforts to create digital programming and content. Fifteen Community Resilience Projects ($90,000) supported stories of community responses in facing COVID-19.

The data submitted by groups through their applications, reports, surveys, and individual interviews provides an invaluable glimpse into the state of humanities organizations across Illinois and how they have responded to challenges in 2020. Together they help give shape to an often overlooked sector that has a foothold in nearly every county in the state.
What is the public humanities ‘sector’?

The humanities play out in people’s lives at the forty-eight community colleges across Illinois, the 3,859 public schools with their two million students, the state’s 643 public libraries, as well as at chapters of other groups – say the League of Women Voters’ forty-one Illinois chapters and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s 26 Illinois adult branches and seven youth and college chapters. Here, though, we are talking specifically about the small, often volunteer-driven, community-based cultural groups – the 1,300 small museums and historical societies, the forty-one members of the Chicago Cultural Alliance, the historic houses, cultural centers, literary groups, and others working in areas such as history, literature, language, philosophy, and education; in other words, the organizations strengthening community fabric by producing oral histories, curating local archives, creating virtual historic walking tours, using the arts to explore history and identity, coordinating book clubs, producing documentary films and radio programs, and designing digital curricula.

Some have been around for decades, some even date back to the 19th century. But many are part of a newer crop. The HUB – Arts and Cultural Center, in Rushville (an hour east of Quincy), was created “as a pipe dream” just five years ago to foster a connection to the arts, rural culture, and local communities through exhibitions and educational experiences. Surviving in what executive director Erin Eveland describes as a “no-man’s land of grants,” The HUB provides provocative programming, such as a recent exhibit, “Arts Kuba,” highlighting connections with Rushville’s growing African immigrant population.

In the case of the Lithuanian Archives Project, it all started with a phone call. Audra Adomenas, who was then working at a library services nonprofit, got a call one morning from someone at the Marian Fathers Monastery on Chicago’s south side. The caller – who’d learned of Audra’s interest in Lithuanian history - said that due to renovation, boxes of old documents were being thrown away. Audra took off to visit the site, only realizing when she arrived that she had spent much of her time as a little girl playing there – no surprise, since the community had shifted from Lithuanian to Latinx in recent years. “I saw a dumpster overflowing with books, archival materials, many with children’s drawings in them. My first thought was how to get them out of there, to a safe place,” she recalls. Returning the next day with a rented truck and seven friends, all of whom spoke Lithuanian, they rescued what they could and moved items to storage. Among the treasures discovered that day were the journals of a Lithuanian American army chaplain who had served in the Pacific theater; they included psychological profiles of Japanese prisoners of war.

The LAP, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2020, is digitizing this material and other archives saved from Marian’s Chicago site, which no longer exists. Reflecting on that phone call 10 years earlier, Audra – now the LAP’s executive director – said:

“I didn’t know that we would be starting a nonprofit. But I did know that the integrity of the community’s history would be lost if we didn’t do something.”

Most of these cultural organizations are relatively...
small, and in an almost inadvertent nod to E.F. Schumacher’s “Small Is Beautiful,” prefer it that way, at least in some respects. As Jeanne Schultz Angel, director of learning experience at Naper Settlement and president of the Illinois Association of Museums, puts it, “Small museums are not puppies waiting to grow into big dogs. They’re little dogs. And if they were to disappear, you’d have a huge loss and an incredible void in culture across the state.”

And this tight-knit quality drives mission. “We believe that these are historic times,’ said Scott of the Western Illinois Museum, and that our museum has a responsibility in helping our community members heal from the social disruption and stay connected to one another.”

**How has COVID-19 impacted local cultural groups?**

An American Alliance of Museums study released in July created quite a buzz in the museum world, concluding with the dire prediction that there was a ‘significant risk’ that more than 30% of museums might not survive 2020 due to COVID-19. Americans for the Arts data released in December showed that across Illinois, the median financial loss per arts group was at $15,500. According to Humanities groups across Illinois were clearly hurting; even the smallest are likely to have part-time staff, consultants, and monthly bills to pay. The LAP had to cancel its annual fundraisers, and on top of that had to move from its long-time office space. The Logan Square Chamber of Arts had to cancel a citywide celebration of 1920 women’s right-to-vote activities. NAJWA Dance Corps on the city’s South Side had to cancel all events and performances. The Springfield Theatre Centre had to cancel most of its 72nd season. The Stephenson County Historical Society in Freeport, had to close its doors for months on end. The list goes on.

According to Illinois Humanities data, 90% of grantee partners lost revenue, and 49% had to dip into savings to survive. Overall, across 177 organizations, there was a combined loss of $9,742,000, with some 35 organizations experiencing staff layoffs. In the beginning, many faced hiccups in trying to navigate the state’s lockdown rules; later, it was often the groups that rely on ticket sales for revenue — especially the historic houses and children’s museums — that were hurt.

This disruption came at a hefty price. Melissa Ngan, executive director of Fifth House Ensemble, said “COVID-19 has put our entire field into an existential crisis. As a performing arts and educational organization, the support system around our work has been greatly impacted. We have been able to shift many engagements...”
and projects to virtual formats, but there are major questions around how sustainable this will be depending on how long the pandemic lasts and how it impacts the financial ecosystem of presenters and funders.

As one local cultural leader said, early on in the pandemic,

“We’ve survived natural disasters – flooding, tornadoes, but nothing like this.”

Then came the pivot(s)

In rapid succession, many small groups threw caution to the wind, tried out new digital tools, learned from mistakes, and marched on. This growth spurt seems a natural next step for cultural groups, but also mirrored the ways that audiences themselves were quickly adapting under lockdown. Looking out for the safety of their tour guides, The Canal Corridor Association in LaSalle transformed in-person tours into a recorded script. Chicago for Chicagoans produced digital walking tours, virtual lectures, and in addition, contracted local artists to create pieces that were then used as postcards. The Chicago Latino Theater Alliance, or CLATA, migrated its annual “Destinos” theater festival to “Destinos Al Aire,” outdoor drive-in performances, in addition to creating new digital initiatives “Charlando” and “Mini Tesoros.” 826CHI, after closing its store, quickly made all of its after-school and in-school youth writing programs virtual. The Abe Lincoln Project in Pittsfield, produced a tourism booklet. Repertorio Latino Theater had to cancel programs from March through October, but instead decided to produce a film project called “Sin Mascaras,” or without masks.

According to Mary Smith, interim executive director of the Evanston-based Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, the museum is expanding substantially its virtual programming, including partnering with TriBraining to develop e-learning museum tours with supporting curriculum and lesson worksheets for teachers to use online. “Our goal,” Smith explained, ”is to pilot the program, conduct focus groups and teacher training, and fully launch these e-learning tours as an alternative to in-person field trips.

“By raising the visibility and reach of the museum through virtual programming and tours, we aim to expand the number of people who can e-visit and enjoy the museum and its programs and bring more to our communities than ever before,” she said.

In many cases there has been a silver lining to this pace of change: it has helped to dramatically expand audiences in new ways. Sara Chapman of Media Burn Archive in Chicago said, “An upside of this pandemic is that it has forced cultural organizations to completely rethink how we serve audiences, breaking decades-old patterns.” Media Burn Archive has started virtual talks with video artists, where filmmakers discuss film and social change, and now has audiences from all over the U.S. and the world. “We are creating a global community of people who care about media and social justice and that will continue long into the future,” Chapman added.

About Face Theatre Collective (AFT) in Chicago was planning a touring production of Power in Pride; instead, AFT worked with actors to adapt material and record in their homes to create Power in Pride at Home. This pivot yielded a series of three to five minute videos, all now streaming for free on their website. This program attracted a major donation, and in addition, has helped build AFT’s national audience.
And Erin Eveland, at the Rushville-based HUB, said that the organization produced virtual artist talks, livestreamed on Facebook and Zoom.

“We had 200 views. For us, this is crazy. Then we did a poetry reading, and had people from California, from all over the country. It was insane to see the attraction of posting these things online.”

Innovation & adaptation projects

At $5,000 per grant, the Innovation & Adaptation Project grants were meant to help propel this work forward. This portfolio supported twenty organizations (out of 140 applicants), to help humanities organizations harness virtual tools to further their work. Eleven of the twenty projects were scattered throughout the state, nine based in Cook County.

The pool of twenty awardees includes ten history sites or museums; three performing arts organizations; two education organizations; and a cultural center, a public art group, and a group that uses book clubs, film screenings and discussion to create community among people with spinal injuries. Projects included using virtual platforms to bridge urban and rural audiences, taking oral histories online, hosting discussions, producing a zine, helping to disseminate the work of researchers, producing a virtual tour of a community’s murals, creating a toolkit for digital archiving, producing a digital museum tour, making educational programs available to adults, celebrating an Illinois author, producing walking tours, producing a Spanish-language theater experience on the impact of COVID-19, and digitally curating the history of African Americans in southern Illinois.

Honey Pot Performance (HPP), a creative Afro-feminist nonprofit launched in 2001, used Innovation and Adaptation grant funds to produce monthly conversations and a half-day event on its Chicago Black Social Culture map. These events, called “Archiving Days,” were meant to document Black social culture from the Great Migration through the early 21st century, with a focus on the emergence of house culture in the 1970s and 1980s.

“We are adapting to the pandemic by imagining new ways to center and connect with communities,” said Meida McNeal, artistic and managing director for HPP.

Responding to community needs

Some groups used lockdowns as an opportunity to take stock of collections in order to serve their stakeholders better – sort of "rainy-day" projects, but of the utmost importance, nonetheless. The Stark County Historical Society in Toulon moved forward with a plan to complete an inventory of its artifacts, purchasing a computer and software in order to take on the tedious task of putting records of all the
artifacts into the system. The Stephenson County Historical Society, with museum doors closed for three months, kept part-time staff employed cleaning, painting, taking inventory of historic artifacts, and eventually producing a traveling artifact kit for students (who would normally have come to the museum). The employees of the Ukrainian National Museum in Chicago decided to reorganize and refresh permanent collections and create new exhibitions from them, but also to take on additional projects, such as creating a catalogue of donated artwork.

Many groups pivoted in other ways, exploring the needs of their communities in a responsive and even visceral way. Sixty Inches from Center, a Chicago-based arts publication and archiving initiative that supports and promotes art and writing that thrive primarily outside of the mainstream historical narratives, saw early in the pandemic that many of its teaching artists, visual artists, curators, and freelance writers were losing full-time jobs, part-time jobs, contracts, service jobs, and teaching gigs. The focus of editorial meetings shifted to how to create opportunities to support its team, especially those substantially impacted. “As a result,” said Sixty Inches’ founder Tempestt Hazel, “we increased the paid writing opportunities and also created an internal mutual aid network between Sixty team members so that they could anonymously donate to a pooled fund for team members in need.”

According to Miriam Larson, executive director at The Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center, the UCIMC, which fosters media and art emphasizing underrepresented voices and perspectives, prides itself in being responsive to community. After a local community member passed from COVID-19, family members reached out to station manager DJ BJ Clark at the Media Center’s volunteer radio station for help with a funeral procession. The radio station set aside programming to air the favorite music of the victim, a dentist, so his widow and all the cars in the procession
could stream the music and honor their loved one as they proceeded.

Many others found ways to provide emergency services for community members. Artists ReEnvisioning Tomorrow partnered with Peoria Playhouse Children’s Museum to create art kits for kids; each included three lesson plans, materials for the three projects, and a booklet with additional ideas or cultural connections. The Chicago-based Puerto Rican Arts Alliance likewise created virtual programming and sent art supplies to the homes of participating students. The Public Media Institute provided more than 900 meals to people in its community. The Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods, in Riverwoods, produced more than 1,200 mask-making kits as part of its Art Supply Exchange. They were distributed to Lake County hospitals, clinics, assisted living centers, and families. Produced with instructions in both English and Spanish, the kits appeared in early April – i.e. at a time when the need for protective equipment was particularly urgent.

A year of racial reckoning

But by far one of the most impressive, concerted themes – if you can call it that across 177 unique organizations - were efforts to respond to the public protests challenging systemic racism that followed the murder of George Floyd. For some, this meant continuing on a well-worn path, for others it meant exploring new territory.

Examples abound. The board of directors at the Center for Racial Harmony in Belleville started a podcast covering systemic racism and COVID-19. Crossing Borders Music in Chicago created a series of 20 videos on the music of Black composers. Deeply Rooted Dance is in the process of filming “Deeply 25: Black Edition,” to be aired early in 2021, along with a work entitled “Goshen,” which addresses issues of race and
No matter your race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexual orientation or background, you have much to gain by deepening your understanding of how we got into this place,” Alexander continued.

Community resilience projects

Responding to the social justice movement and inequities was also a major theme in the Community Resilience projects that received funding. Of the 15 projects, each receiving $6,000 (and selected from ninety three applicants), eight are based in Chicago and seven elsewhere in the state. All reflecting community resilience under COVID-19, they include: family stories from the Chicago neighborhoods of Auburn Gresham, Austin, and South Shore (BECOME: Center for Community Engagement and Social Change); live-streamed dialogues on race and identity in the time of COVID-19 (Full Spectrum Features NFP); videos documenting the experiences of diverse Chicagoans during COVID-19 (Collaboraction Theatre Company); a podcast series produced by Authors Circle alumni featuring stories from across the city (ConTextos); a comic book accompanied by street installations (Kuumba Lynx); oral histories with leaders of cultural groups across the city (the Chicago Cultural Alliance); and a print and audio series of interviews with community leaders (South Side Weekly in Chicago).

Pilsen-based Changing Worlds, whose mission is to foster inclusive communities through oral history, writing, and art programs that improve student learning, worked with Benito Juarez Community Academy students to help them process the effects and trauma from this time. Under the guidance of Chicago Public School (CPS) art teacher Liz Winfield, the students produced a mini-book of photos and writings, probing the questions,
How have our individual and collective lives been impacted? What does healing look like? and What does it mean to survive during a pandemic?

This work, in turn, became the focus of a WBEZ story by reporter Linda Lutton.

Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods presents nature-inspired programs in the arts and humanities for people of all income levels, ages and backgrounds. With Community Resilience funding, Brushwood Center worked with Waukegan ethnographer Carla Aldana and illustrator Janet McDonnell to shine a light on community leaders and their stories in a bilingual initiative called “Lake County Leads.”

Carbondale Community Arts, in partnership with the African American Museum of Southern Illinois and Southern Illinois University Carbondale’s (SIUC) journalism school, worked with area high school students to produce videos in response to the region’s Black Lives Matter movement. One, a nine-minute interview with Joseph Brown, professor of Africana Studies at SIUC, is entitled “Always A Fight.”

“There’s a larger issue of qualified Black people not being treated as if they are really that qualified,’ Brown said. “And that’s because they don’t control the structure in which they have to work or live,” Brown added. "That’s the problem with equity. We will deny women. We will deny"
Black and brown people. We will deny people who are differently-abled. Because we’re not going to look at their credentials, we’re going to look at how comfortable or uncomfortable they make us.”

Other projects celebrated community resilience in other, equally creative, ways. These included a ceramic “memory wall” created by area youth (Atlanta Public Library District); a collection of photographs and videos representing the stories of first responders (Aurora Regional Fire Museum); an evening of original music depicting “Covid-19 Galena, The Story in Song” (Galena Center for the Arts); and a “call to action” to small-town residents to express their experience of COVID-19 in various media forms (Savanna Historical Society).

The Effingham Public Library, which serves a largely rural population in Effingham County in east-central Illinois, took on an inspiring Community Resilience project: “Effingham: At the Crossroads of Education.” The library worked with renowned local photographer Tytia Habing to take portraits of local teachers, administrators and students with and without their masks; combined with personal interviews capturing how they
all pivoted to respond, these challenged assumptions about how school happens in the country.

“On one level, the work celebrates collaboration between parents, students, school support staff, and teachers as they work to keep each other safe while providing quality education,” said Johnna Schultz, assistant director of the library. “But on a deeper level, the work acknowledges the tension that the American promise of equal education for all simply isn’t possible – and this pandemic has created an education gap that will negatively affect many.”

Like many other cultural groups, the library also stepped up public services in other ways during COVID-19; for example, staff have taken laptops and WiFi to rural communities in the county to help people apply for unemployment.

**More than dollars**

The grants made by Illinois Humanities were relatively small dollars in the world of philanthropy, ranging from $2,500 to $7,500, but they played an impactful role during the pandemic. Findings from a survey of grantee partners on their priorities and needs helped Illinois Humanities find ways to bolster funding by providing convening opportunities and capacity-building sessions. These led to other revelations about what humanities organizations need – and what they can provide.

Staff hosted a two-day virtual workshop, on how to facilitate small-group, reflective conversations; a workshop on “Virtual Programs & Audience Engagement;” and a two-day virtual workshop “Best Practices in Using Social Media.”

While these convenings provided resource-sharing opportunities, they also – in tandem with the grants – illuminated the ways in which local humanities leaders are eager for opportunities to be in community among colleagues.

“In the middle of April, we were notified that we received the COVID-19 Emergency relief grant,” said Erin Eveland of The HUB. “The knowledge that we had some relief funds coming gave us the ability to move out of survival mode and become creative again. Because of the funds… we were able to focus on what our community needed and how we could best serve them.”

“By receiving the IH general operating grant, we felt relief that culture organizations like ours matter, that being a culture-specific history museum in Chicago matters,” said Tetyana Chervinska of the Ukrainian National Museum. “Such support gave us hope that things would work out and helped us to keep going.”

Kevin Wilmot of the African American Cultural & Genealogical Society in Decatur said, “In the middle of March, when the world as we knew it stopped, our income stopped. We lost all visitors and many volunteer hours. We lost the opportunity to host our annual Juneteenth Fundraiser banquet. This grant completed the financial resources to pay expenses for the first half of the year. This grant saved the day!”

Juliene McCormick of the Savanna Historical Society said, “When citizens were informed that their stories would potentially be a part of the ‘broader story’ state-
wide, there were comments of disbelief that we, from our small, outside-of-Chicago-community, would be included in such a project.”

**Making the call for action**

Entering a hopeful, yet uncertain, new year, there are concerns across the sector. The ability of smaller organizations to remain flexible under duress has obvious limits. For one thing, many have had to dip into whatever savings they had pre-COVID-19, leaving them on less certain footing should lockdowns once again impede revenue-generating activities.

Some worry privately that the funders who have stepped up in this difficult time won’t be as readily available in the coming year. And some sectors, such as public libraries, as the Illinois Library Association’s Diane Foote outlined in a September 2020 newsletter piece, depend primarily on local property taxes, which are expected to be particularly hard-hit not immediately but in the medium-to long-term. So, for the public humanities sector, in broad terms, while there is a need for strategic partnerships — with media, tech, universities, and school systems — there is also, simply put, a need for more supporters and more sustained support.

Making the case is a challenge for a sector whose brand has been notoriously lackluster, whose story has been so poorly told for far too long. This sector may be accused of being too divorced from 'real' issues affecting communities, perhaps too slow to respond to breaking news and too white to relate to the very real social inequities facing many of our neighbors and friends.

The picture that emerges in 2021 is of a diverse and dynamic sector, committed to sharing truthful and unfettered histories, to creative storytelling, to respectful and actively inclusive dialogues, and to addressing inequities. It is clear that they inspire the joy that lifelong learning brings with it — but is it a stretch to imagine that they can also help address the next pandemic, economic slowdown, urban disinvestment or rural depopulation? What about climate change? Doesn’t the commitment by these groups to understanding shared humanity allow us to imagine solutions we wouldn’t otherwise? And — when one considers the commonalities that emerge from this remarkable set of stories from across the state — don’t these narratives in
aggregate debunk some of the clichés that tend to shape the story Illinois tells about itself?

Gisele Hamm, MAPPING program manager at the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA), sees culture as being core to the IIRA's work with rural communities. Based in Macomb, the IIRA's MAPPING program facilitates strategic visioning and planning sessions with rural communities who have experienced population drain, dying newspapers, and a shrinking tax base, in order to pivot and imagine locally-led, sustainable growth. While 2020 presented many challenges to local civic engagement, Hamm sees culture playing a critical role in planning.

“There’s a growing interest in quality of life, not just in recruiting big business,” she said. “We’re seeing more millennials at the table. Boomers went to the jobs; millennials clearly want arts and culture.”

Danielle Allen, the renowned American classicist and political scientist at Harvard University (and one of the first instructors in Illinois Humanities’ Odyssey Project), in accepting the Public Humanities Award given in 2018, explained, “We understand lives through stories. We also understand them through the analysis that history and social sciences bring... It’s not just that we understand a life through the arts and humanities, we have the chance to understand our life together...That’s why [this] work is so important, of building community conversations, with the resources of the humanities – inviting people to work together to diagnose our circumstances, and find pathways forward to improved human flourishing together, through conversation...The caliber of our words, the art with which we yield them, is transformative...The humanities don’t let us take language, and arts, and expression for granted. In that regard, they give people tools of empowerment over and over and over again.”

Elaine Scarry, in her provocative defense of thinking paired with rapid action as well as what she refers to as ‘equality of survival,’ *(Thinking In An Emergency, 2011)* stated: “The seduction against thinking in an emergency comes, as we have seen, from two sources: first, from a false opposition between thinking and acting; second, from a plausible (but in the end, false) opposition between thinking and rapid action. Now a third, equally potent, form of seduction becomes visible: the acts of thinking that go on in emergencies are not recognized by us as acts of thinking.” As Scarry concluded, “We need to turn to this work of mutual protection. If we are late in beginning, we are not yet too late.”

What wise words. It is not too late to do so. And to make sure that local, community-based cultural groups are at the table.
CHAPTER 3

The story the numbers tell

COVID-19 put an unprecedented strain on non-profit organizations in Illinois and on the people who make public humanities happen. Between March and July 2020, Illinois Humanities awarded $710,000 through 189 COVID-19 Emergency Relief Grants to 177 humanities and cultural non-profit organizations experiencing financial hardship as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

This chapter summarizes information about the 189 COVID relief grants Illinois Humanities distributed in 2020 to 177 unique grantee partners and draws heavily on applications, surveys, reports, interviews and other input from grantee partners, in addition to contextual data from local and national sources. Several general research questions related to grantmaking trends, trends among grantee partners, and the contexts within which grantee partners shaped this analysis:

- How were grants distributed geographically?

Figure 1: Map of 177 Illinois Humanities grantee partners
• What types of organizations received grants?

• How are organizations being affected by and responding to COVID-19?

• How does the geographic location of organizations compare with state and local characteristics such as population density, income, and COVID-19 incidence? In other words, what is the context within which these organizations are operating during this time?

How are public humanities organizations in Illinois being affected by, and responding to, the pandemic?

Every organization included in this report has been profoundly impacted by COVID-19, operationally and programmatically. This group of 177 humanities organizations lost an estimated $9,742,000 in revenue in 2020. Ninety percent of organizations lost revenue and many organizations reported being at risk for layoffs; 14% reported fearing permanent closure.

Organizations suffered significant audience loss. Collectively, grantee partners estimated reaching nearly 1.7 million fewer people than they anticipated being able to serve during 2020.

Although nearly all grantee partners reported reaching smaller audiences – due in no small part to the day-to-day challenges and ambiguities of conducting outreach and programming in a pandemic – grantee partners continued to find ways to serve an estimated 270,000 people through programs from June to September 2020.

While COVID-19 relief grants did not come close to meeting grantee partners’ financial needs, it enabled organizations to hire humanists and artists, sustain staffing, and offer trainings; as well as document and preserve community experiences through storytelling and dialogue; use spaces in new ways; and reinforce and reframe why their missions matter. [See Chapter 2, In a Year of Duress] Experiences reported by Illinois Humanities COVID-19 grantee partners align strongly with findings from the October 2020 Wallace Foundation’s report, "Arts Organizations’ Early Response to COVID-19 Uncertainty: Insights from the Field," namely:

• Increased urgency from the sector to address systemic racism and social justice

![Figure 2: Organizational impacts of COVID-19](image-url)
• Acceleration of digital programming
• Intense focus on emergency relief fundraising
• Finding a diversified audience and broader reach through digital programming

What kinds of organizations were funded?

COVID-19 relief grants supported organizations with broad and diverse engagements in the humanities that provide critical access to educational and cultural resources for people across Illinois. These organizations facilitate lifelong learning in areas of humanistic inquiry such as literature, history, folklore, and art history.15

While some grantee partners have longstanding relationships with Illinois Humanities over the course of its 40-plus-year tenure as the state’s affiliate for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), forty five of the 177 grantee partners were first-time applicants to Illinois Humanities: 17 are located in Cook and collar counties, and 28 elsewhere in the state.16

As part of the effort to describe the grantee partner landscape, Illinois Humanities assigned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Organizations (Primary category)</th>
<th>Organizations (Secondary category)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts: performing arts (theater, music, dance, etc.), visual arts, art centers</td>
<td>57 32.2%</td>
<td>11 6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic and community engagement:</td>
<td>7 4.0%</td>
<td>27 15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and heritage: cultural and ethnic awareness, heritage</td>
<td>12 6.8%</td>
<td>25 14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education: classes, schools, libraries, workshops, trainings, certifications</td>
<td>2 1.1%</td>
<td>98 55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History: history museums and societies, historic preservation</td>
<td>78 44.1%</td>
<td>6 3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature and writing: literature, reading, writing</td>
<td>8 4.5%</td>
<td>3 1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media: journalism, publishing, radio, audio, film, digital media, photography</td>
<td>13 7.3%</td>
<td>5 2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>177 100%</td>
<td>175 98.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Illinois Humanities data.
categories to each organization drawn from the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) system used by the IRS. However, when Illinois Humanities staff met with grantee partners during a December 7, 2020 virtual meeting, grantee partners pointed out that many of the NTEE codes did not accurately reflect their work. As a result, staff developed seven categories derived from the NTEE descriptions and definitions of “the humanities” from the NEH to better describe and group “like” work. All 177 grantee partners were then asked to select up to two of these categories (See Figure 3).

The average age of grantee partners is 20 years: half of grant recipients were founded in the year 2000 or later, demonstrating a growing interest across communities in the need for humanities organizations. The oldest organization was founded in 1873. Five organizations are more than 100 years old.

Organizations with budgets of up to $1.5 million were eligible to apply for Illinois Humanities COVID-19 Emergency Relief Grants. The vast majority of grantee partners have budgets well under the eligibility requirements of the relief funds: 82% have annual budgets of less than a half a million dollars and half of grantee partners have annual budgets of less than $100,000.

Given that COVID-19 relief grant opportunities ranged only from $2,500 to $7,500, it is notable that for two out of three recipients, grant awards represented more than 5% of their annual

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**Figure 4: Organizations by decade founded**

![Bar chart showing the number of organizations by decade founded from Before 1920 to 2020. The highest number of organizations were founded in the 2010s.]
Grants were distributed throughout the state. Approximately one-third of applicants were approved in most regions. In 17 of 18 congressional districts, each district received an average of $38,500 distributed across approximately eleven grantee partners.

COVID-19 relief grants were distributed in a similar pattern to pre-pandemic foundation giving in Illinois. Several counties received a slightly larger share of Illinois Humanities COVID-19 grants compared to reported 2017 foundation dollars; these include DeKalb, LaSalle, Effingham, Jackson, and Logan Counties.

**Relief funding aligns with population density**

According to the United State Census Bureau, 88.5% of Illinoisans live in urban areas and 11.5% live in rural areas. Similarly, 160 grantee partners (90%) are located in urban areas and seventeen (10%) are located in rural areas.

160 COVID-19 grantee partners (90%) are located in urban areas and seventeen (10%) are located in rural areas.

The seventy six grantee partners from Cook County, (home to 41% of the state’s population), received the largest proportion of grant dollars. Overall funding patterns follow overall population distribution. However, when analyzed against funding-per-resident, counties with the largest dollars-per-resident figures tend to be less densely populated counties (i.e. counties with fewer than 10,000 residents) such as Scott, Gallatin, Stark, Putnam, and Schuyler counties.

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**Figure 5: Grants by location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Population (2017 est.)</th>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Funded</th>
<th>Percent funded</th>
<th>Funds awarded</th>
<th>% Funds awarded</th>
<th>Funds per resident</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook County</td>
<td>5,274,129</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>$343,000</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
<td>6.5¢</td>
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<td>“Collar counties”</td>
<td>3,325,693</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>$64,500</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>2.0¢</td>
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<td>(DuPage, Kane, Kendall,</td>
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<td>32.8%</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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Organizations in 55 (out of 102) counties received grants. Cook County, which is home to 41% of the state's population, includes 76 grantee organizations.

**Number of grantee organizations per county**

[0] [2] [5 or 6] [1] [3 or 4] [More than 6]

Figure 8: Forefront – Foundation giving to Illinois recipients by county, 2017

Figure 9: Illinois Humanities – COVID-19 grant relief funds by county, 2020

Forefront / Candid map source: “Giving in Illinois,” 2019. Based on 2017 grants awarded by all U.S. foundations available in the Candid database to recipient organizations in Illinois. Includes all grants of $1,000 or more awarded by 7,577 U.S. foundations, including 2,551 Illinois foundations.

Illinois is sometimes called the most “American” of states because the racial, ethnic and immigrant diversity, age, educational attainment, and economic statistics closely parallel the overall United States. According to 2019 American Community Survey data, Illinois has nearly 13 million residents, the median age is 39, and nearly 12% of people are living below the poverty line. Of the state’s population, 61% of Illinoisans are White; 17% are Hispanic; 14% are Black, 6% are Asian and less than 1% are Native/Indigenous. According to United Way, 35% of Illinois households struggle to afford basic needs. Such households are located throughout the state.

According to the United States Census Bureau, 88.5% of Illinoisans live in urban areas and 11.5% live in rural areas. The differences between urban and rural counties are myriad in Illinois: urban counties have higher wages, lower unemployment rates and higher levels of educational attainment than rural counties; rural counties have less access to healthcare, public transportation, broadband accessibility, K-12 education funding, and residents have shorter life expectancies.

These contexts of race and ethnicity, socio-economic levels, rural and urban differences, and the disparate impacts of COVID-19 in Illinois underline the importance of situating humanities organizations within local contexts of geography, demographics, and the pandemic.

Poverty spans urban and rural communities alike in Illinois. Two thirds of the 177 grantee partners are located in zip codes where more than 35% of households are experiencing poverty. Fifty
According to United Way, 35% of Illinois households struggle to afford basic needs. Such households are located throughout the state.

Percent of households below the ALICE poverty threshold (by ZIP code)

- < 10%
- 10 to 20%
- 20 to 30%
- 30 to 40%
- 40 to 50%
- 50 to 60%
- > 60%

67 organizations (38%) are located in zip codes with more COVID cases per person than the statewide average. 25 organizations are in the most impacted zip codes where more than 10% of people have tested positive for COVID.

Sources: IL Department of Public Health 2021, United States Census Bureau 2018, Illinois Humanities.
two grantee partners (29.4%) are located in communities where the majority of households (>50%) are experiencing poverty.

**Grantee partners operate in places with significant rates of COVID-19**

As of January 2021, Illinois had the fifth highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country overall. And, in tandem with the rest of the country, African Americans and Latinx people have borne a starkly disproportionate burden of cases and deaths. As of the writing of this report, Black and Hispanic Illinoisans are being vaccinated at half the rate of white residents.24

Given the preponderance of grantee partners located in zip codes experiencing high levels of poverty, it may not be surprising that 38% of grantees are located in zip codes with more COVID-19 cases than the statewide average. In fact, 25 grantee partners operate in zip codes where more than 10% of people have tested positive for COVID-19.

**Summary**

For many grantee partners, COVID-19 relief grants were transformative. Not only did the dollars provide urgently-needed relief, funds enabled them to deliver on missions during an unprecedented time. In some cases funds reached areas of the state that traditionally receive less funding. The geographic distribution of grants ensured broad and diverse access to public humanities to communities experiencing financial distress and areas suffering disproportionately from the impacts of the virus.

When grantee partners are mapped against demographic, geographic, and pandemic contexts, it becomes clear that humanities organizations are situated in communities that were under significant economic duress prior to the pandemic and more than a third of grantee partners are located in places that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

These data, when considered in sum, paint a landscape of an ecosystem populated by diverse organizations working locally in communities in ways that have heightened relevance during and post-pandemic times. Given the number of humanities organizations operating in areas in which households struggle to make ends meet, and in which COVID-19 has had a devastating impact, including areas in which there is disproportionate impact on surrounding communities, we need to understand the value of these organizations for increasing community resilience, social cohesion, and equity in a profoundly new light.
The projects funded by Community Resilience grants, profiled in Chapter 4, illustrate the ways in which the operational and programmatic responses of humanities organizations are serving to individually mitigate the effects of the pandemic within their communities and, collectively as a sector, across the state.
Illinois Humanities awarded $90,000 in Community Resilience grants to 15 organizations across the state. The intent of the Community Resilience funding opportunity was to find ways to support humanities organizations to make visible the experiences of residents during the COVID-19 pandemic and highlight stories of community resilience throughout. Grant funds could be used to cover operating, documentation, and program accessibility expenses, as well as to pay storytellers, scholars, writers, humanists, artists, musicians, photographers, interviewees, and participants. Grantee partners were asked to document their story-capturing process and supported projects needed to be available to the public.

This particular call for proposals was inspired by community history and public humanities efforts including Paper Monuments; One Poem at A Time; Fill the Walls with Hope; the Pulitzer Center’s “Mother of Mothers;” and the national Works Progress Administration posters – projects that understand the power of the humanities to leverage and elevate the potential of communities and the particularities of place.
Many of the Community Resilience projects were informed by the specific history of each community and drew on local assets and residents' stories. The descriptions that follow are in grantee partners' own words.

**Atlanta Public Library District**

Atlanta Public Library shines the spotlight on an experience of the pandemic often overlooked – the experience of children. Children in the Atlanta community had their summers turned upside down. The recreational opportunities they had looked forward to throughout the school year – library, swimming pool, baseball diamond – were closed. They were unable to meet with their friends across town. Meanwhile, many families struggled with illness, loss, and financial strain. The library provided an opportunity for kids to tell their stories through art, creating a permanent art installation in the canteen of the library’s children’s space. Library staff worked with the local school district to provide art supplies and guide kids through the process of sketching their memory of COVID-19 summer, writing an explanation of their drawing, and painting the images on ceramic tiles. These tiles were later professionally installed in the arrangement of a mural. Photographs of the tiles and student explanations are being assembled into a book and a map for visitors in addition to appearing on the library’s website and social media.

**Aurora Regional Fire Museum**

Aurora Regional Fire Museum reached out to an underrepresented subset of the public – firefighters – to gather stories of their experience working during the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on Northern Illinois, but expanding across the state, the museum used online surveys to capture the stories of firefighters bravely confronting new dangers in order to keep their communities safe. The Museum collected images of firefighters with and without PPE in order to highlight the human faces behind the masks and to document the various styles of PPE used during the pandemic, including improvised and makeshift PPE used in the face of dire shortages. These images and stories formed the basis of a public exhibit open to visitors and shared extensively over social media. The museum’s social media presence has grown over 13% since the start of the pandemic, reaching more audiences than ever.
faith-based community representatives, nonprofit organizations, universities, and corporate representatives, BECOME has broadened the reach of resources and services in these communities and empowered residents to shape leadership decisions. The Maximizing Impact Initiative has also resulted in a comprehensive tool for connecting people to resources and three videos bringing attention to partner community’s context, situation, and acts of service and resilience. In a recent panel hosted by Chicago African Americans in Philanthropy, BECOME spotlighted South Shore Works, a resident-founded and driven coalition.

**Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods**

Recognizing the intertwined impacts of COVID-19, racial and social inequalities, and environmental health, Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods launched “Lake County Leads: Stories of Environmental Justice and Empowerment during COVID-19.” Carla Aldana, a Waukegan resident and ethnographer with a passion for environmental justice, conducted Zoom and phone interviews with five extraordinary Lake County residents of various backgrounds.

**BECOME: Center for Community Engagement and Social Change**

When the pandemic first gained momentum in March of 2020, BECOME mobilized its networks on the South and West sides of Chicago immediately. Within a week of Illinois and Chicago issuing “shelter in place” orders, BECOME virtually convened strategy meetings with local and national nonprofit representatives in order to address the needs of marginalized Chicago communities. Out of these conversations, BECOME developed the Maximizing Impact Initiative focused on the South Shore, Auburn Gresham and Austin neighborhoods. By facilitating discussions, information sessions, and data-driven webinars among community members,
storytelling products were disseminated throughout the community, in partnership with the Lake County Health Department, as part of a digital campaign, including video vignettes, comics, blog posts, and social media posts.

Carbondale Community Arts

Carbondale Community Arts (CCA) is creating space for intergenerational and cross-cultural conversation in rural Illinois communities about the pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests, and the future of the community. With the support of the Community Resilience grant, they partnered with Southern Illinois University (SIU) School of Journalism to provide much-needed employment to Carbondale youth during the pandemic while also raising stories of resilience in Southern Illinois Black communities into public conversation. Through a seven-week program, youth and SIU student mentors collaborated to gather videos of oral histories of Black Carbondale and Southern Illinois residents about their experiences during the pandemic and in the Black Lives Matter movement. The students gained crucial technical and video editing skills while learning how to compile multiple stories into a single video presentation. The video testifies to many experiences of resilience, but also seeks to be a resource for future resilience. In addition to being shared widely through student presentations, exhibitions, and online platforms, it will be preserved in CCA’s archive and the African American Museum of Southern Illinois’ archive.

backgrounds and ages who demonstrated resilience in supporting their communities during the pandemic. Stories include a librarian who leveraged networks to distribute PPE and a Latina mom who set up a food distribution center in her basement. Illustrator Janet McDonnell, in collaboration with Aldana, brought the themes from the community stories to life in a variety of artistic forms. The final
Changing Worlds

For a changing community like Pilsen, a community already grappling with the effects of gentrification, pollution, and racial and economic inequity, the experience of COVID-19 was especially fraught and complex. Two Changing World artists and Pilsen residents Diana Solis and Jean Parisi worked with high school students at Benito Juarez High School and on their own to collect videos, audio, and photos from Pilsen residents answering the question, “How have you failed, survived, and thrived in the time of COVID-19?” The materials were collaboratively combined into a digital scrapbook intended to serve as a collective memory of the pandemic. All the people interviewed identified strongly with the Pilsen community and lamented the loss of interpersonal interactions that lay at the heart of the community’s strong ties. Still, community members came together to reimagine family traditions, support one another through unimaginable loss, and provide for each other through food drives and caring for the homeless population.

Chicago Cultural Alliance

Arts and culture professionals have been deeply impacted by the pandemic but are also at the forefront of community healing. The Chicago Cultural Alliance is collecting and archiving Stories of Arts Resilience (SOAR) during the COVID-19 pandemic. In collaboration with several artists, performers, archivists, oral historians, curators, museum administrators, collections managers, graduate students, and researchers, Chicago Cultural Alliance conducted and recorded a series of dialogic oral histories – two arts professionals interviewing one another – reflecting on arts resilience during the pandemic. Using StoryCorps Connect, an innovative tool developed by StoryCorps Chicago, 20 to 30 oral histories have been collected reflecting a broad range of arts and museum professionals and diverse cultural groups. SOAR will serve as the foundation for a free, publicly-accessible archive stored in perpetuity at the Library of Congress. This archive will serve as a critical resource for the arts community in Illinois and nationwide to build solidarity, heal, and envision long-term planning in the face of crisis.
Collaboration focused its efforts on amplifying the voices and artwork of ‘essential’ Chicago communities too often cast aside. Collaboration hired five Chicago artists – Mia Park, Sami Ismat, Jasmin Cardenas, Teh’Ray Hale Sr. aka PHENOM, and Willie Round – to create short, personal videos bringing attention to the impact of the pandemic on their lives and communities. The artists speak from their varied, overlapping experiences as essential workers, as members of Asian-American, Black, and Latinx communities, immigrant and refugee communities, and neighborhoods spanning Little Village, Englewood, Kenwood, Austin, and North Lawndale. Each video was unique and reflected the artistic vision and personal insights of each artist. Cardenas’ video “Essential?...’Tengo que trabajar’” took the form of candid interviews with theatre artists and essential workers in Little Village while Ismat’s video “Transfixed” took the form of a solo video performance about his experience as a Syrian refugee caught in a fraught immigration system while grieving his father’s passing from COVID-19. The videos have already garnered thousands of views on multiple online streaming platforms and received glowing praise in the Chicago Tribune.
ConTextos

ConTextos is ‘Complicating the Narrative’ on COVID-19 and communities directly impacted by the criminal justice system, racism, and economic inequality in Chicago. ConTextos hired two of their alumni authors and founders of the podcast show *Complicating the Narrative*, Mariah and Tatiana, to produce six new episodes. The third season of the podcast features stories of community resilience during the summer of 2020 from a diverse group of organizational participants and partners. These participants and partners include Chicago Public School (CPS) students, IMAN (Inner-City Muslim Action Network), MAAFA Redemption Project, ConTextos Open Circle participants, and ConTextos alumni. These episodes, which were promoted extensively over social media to broad audiences, paint a picture of humanities organizations, community organizations, and diverse community members supporting each other through a summer of adversity and opportunity.
Effingham Public Library

Effingham is sometimes referred to as the “Crossroads of America” due to its location at the crossroads of Interstates 57 and 70. With the pandemic of 2020, the rural community of Effingham also found itself at the “Crossroads of Education,” trying to find the right path forward. To honor Effingham’s teachers, principals, parents, and community members who stepped up to support students through this period of unprecedented change, Effingham Public Library conducted interviews with and photographed teachers, administrators, and students from local schools. The photographs were intended to highlight the teachers and principals who cooked and delivered meals so students wouldn’t go hungry, ‘teacher parades’ were organized so young students could see their teachers, and locations were identified to distribute school supplies and technology for parents engaging in remote learning for the first time. Prints of these photographs were pasted onto concrete and brick surfaces of businesses around downtown Effingham using a special wheat-paste application method. The photographs, along with the interviews, were documented and shared online on a dedicated Instagram page and on the library’s website to invite public conversations acknowledging the extraordinary efforts of community members and how to best support all residents going forward.

Full Spectrum Features

Full Spectrum Features invited us to pause during the pandemic, and to reflect with humor and humility on the unique experiences of a subset of POC – performers of color. In collaboration with Dominizuelan, a comedic duo made up of Chicago acting and theatre veterans Wendy Mateo
and Lorena Diaz, Full Spectrum Features created a short film featuring a series of humorous sketches highlighting the systemic racism that actors and other performers of color experience every day. Full Spectrum Features also invited the public to engage with the film through a series of weekly live watch parties on Twitch and Facebook Live. During these live watch parties, Lolo, Mateo, a special guest, and the public engaged in a dynamic virtual conversation on different aspects of race and identity. The premiere watch party, “Identity is a Construct,” attracted over 100 audience members. Other watch party themes include: “Identity is Real & Also an Illusion,” “Identity is Profitable & Also Curated,” and “Identity is Divisive and Also Unifying.”

To showcase the resilience of the arts community in Galena during this challenging time, the Galena Center for the Arts organized the virtual concert “Covid-19 Galena, The Story in Song,” inviting local songwriters to use the hardships of the pandemic as creative source material to write and perform original songs. Songwriters recorded their songs from home while sheltering in place and Galena Center for the Arts enhanced the videos and compiled them into a dynamic virtual concert incorporating photography from local photographers to increase visual impact. The series premiered on YouTube on October 29 and has been garnering views daily. It will remain freely accessible online in perpetuity as a resource for the community.

**Kuumba Lynx**

Kuumba Lynx worked with residents of the Uptown and Englewood neighborhoods to promote intergenerational conversation and create new spaces and resources for community resilience through creative writing and art. Engaging their dedicated teaching artists and restorative justice facilitators, Kuumba Lynx hosted 12 discovery sessions and writing classes over Zoom this summer with
50 participating artists, youth, and families. They discussed their experiences of racism and the impact of COVID-19 on their lives as intertwined issues, transmitting these reflections through poetry and prose. Young artist Jahari Brodnax translated their writing into a series of inspirational posters posted in predominantly low-income Black, Latino, and Arab neighborhoods across Chicago. Brodnax also created the Sprout Coloring Book, an artistic expression of these writings alongside quotes from the summer writing sessions, that children and families across Chicago can relate to and use as an artistic outlet for their feelings.

**South Side Weekly**

Life during COVID-19 often feels like dystopia, especially for many South Side communities on the frontlines of multiple simultaneous fights against racial injustice and economic inequality. The South Side Weekly, a community print and online publication, invited community members to envision new futures – utopias – for the South Side in the midst of crisis. The organization
collected submissions of photography, poetry, audio pieces, comics, illustrations, and prose for compilation into the November 11 Future Visioning issue. In addition to 250 mail subscribers, the issue was available in free boxes on the street, in bars and cafes, libraries, community centers, and food pantries across the South Side. The issue is also available for free on South Side Weekly's website, which reaches 60,000 audience members per month. South Side Weekly further partnered with community-based institutions with delivery services, such as the Market Box Program at the Experimental Station and South Side Blooms, a cut flower delivery service, to distribute copies of the issue to new audience members. By envisioning new futures, South Side Weekly engaged marginalized communities in an act of collective hope in pursuit of racial and social justice, and community wellbeing.
CHAPTER 5

COVID-19 and the Humanities in Illinois: keystones and arches
key-stone: a central stone at the summit of an arch, locking the whole together.

“A post-COVID-19 community should foster social inclusion, build accessible public spaces and civic institutions, safeguard all forms of cultural heritage, protect and support culture professionals, promote diversity, creativity and innovation, and integrate the arts and culture sector into its recovery and development.”


The 177 grantee partners featured in this report are not comprehensive of all humanities and cultural organizations in the state, but they set into stark relief the impact of COVID-19 on such organizations. They also, make radiantly visible the robust ecosystem and critical role these organizations are playing in making their communities healthier, less isolated and more resilient.
As the state increasingly faces the need to grapple with its complex histories, public health disparities and a collective racial reckoning, humanities organizations can serve as the keystones needed to enable us to arch towards the future.

Based on what is being learned nationally, there may be emerging mandates: arts and culture organizations are being called upon to be more active in their communities and more reflective of community stories and experiences. Notable findings from surveys and interviews from 124,000 respondents sourced from 635 cultural organizations, nationally (namely museums, collections, historical societies, performing arts organizations, and arts and cultural centers) about the role of culture and community engagement during COVID-19 include:

- Digital programming is providing needed options. 53% of respondents reported participating in one or more digital cultural activities
- Support for creativity is providing much-needed solace. 81% surveyed reported doing something new and creative (cooking and baking), making something by hand (like pottery, quilting, knitting), making art, photography, creative writing
- Content creators matter. 62% of people are accessing cultural content from history museums and history attractions, performing arts centers and individual and ensemble performers
- Inclusion and representation are urgent matters. Respondents – particularly communities of color and indigenous communities – are looking to cultural organizations to tell stories that are relevant and reflect their experiences
- Many people who are participating in online content had not physically visited these kinds of places in the past year

Perhaps the take-away most relevant to our Illinois ecosystem is the following:

“**Americans want arts and culture organizations to become more active participants in their communities and they want to see their communities better reflected in these organizations.**”

These findings align strongly with what Illinois humanities organizations are expressing:

- They are looking for ways to work differently and in less isolation
- Organizations expect and want to give more attention to equity and inclusion
- Organizations are excited about, and anticipate, opportunities for organizational transformation – particularly in terms of new modes of engagement and new audiences
- The desire to network and connect with peers through meet-ups, trainings and peer-skills-shares is high
- Organizations believe there is real value in developing a shared language and understanding of the overall landscape of humanities organizations, and they want to contribute to that community
What follows is a set of ideas and recommendations drawn from the research, analysis and conversations with grantee partners that inform this report.

**BIG IDEAS**

1. **Humanities are necessary for democracy and for enabling us to imagine what we want in our society.** Public humanities organizations, by design, provide the kinds of experiences which enable participants to be “more likely to engage in civic life, and more likely to hold aspirations for improving the common good.”

2. **Public humanities organizations contribute to individual and community resilience.** Recipients of COVID-19 relief grants are providing space, structure and the programming to foster social cohesion. They are enabling people to become closer to one another, develop a better understanding of the places in which they live, and create and share narratives about their experiences.

3. **Illinois Humanities COVID-19 relief grantee partners’ experiences align with what research shows about how public humanities organizations respond during times of crisis.** Grantee partners are serving as community anchors for trusted information, for mitigating social isolation, for enabling people to make and create objects and narratives that help them to process loss, trauma, and joy. They are also – while under significant duress – finding ways to incorporate new technologies and new modes for delivering on their missions.

4. **Every county in Illinois has a humanities organization and cultural assets; many are invisible to the funding and policy communities.** Public humanities organizations are insufficiently visible as a sector and undervalued as a resource. Rural communities, in particular, have historically received less visibility and funding in relation to their metro peers. Overlooking this sector runs the risk of losing those community anchors most committed to preserving the artifacts, ephemera and memory of Illinois’ history and identity, and simultaneously failing to capitalize on an ecosystem ripe to contribute to the state’s ability to repair and heal the triple pandemics of COVID-19, racial reckoning, and disinvestment across rural and urban communities.

5. **Humanities organizations in Illinois are often operating in places in which people were experiencing economic distress before COVID-19 and which have been disproportionately affected by the impacts of the pandemic.** The operational and programmatic responses of grantee partners are serving to individually mitigate the effects of the pandemic within their communities and, collectively as a sector, across the state. Understanding the contexts in which these organizations are operating amplifies the importance and significance of their humanities missions.

6. **Money counts – especially for organizations with smaller budgets.** Relatively small grants ($2,500 – $7,500) can have transformative impacts for small organizations, especially when they are in areas overlooked or under-funded by philanthropy traditionally. Public and philanthropic funds directed to humanities organizations should be understood as investments, not diversions. As outlined in Chapter 1, public humanities organizations are not “cost-centers;” rather, they help bolster revenue in Illinois.
RECOMMENDATIONS

For Illinois Humanities

Illinois Humanities is working to understand and learn from the intensive experience of this past year. Given Illinois Humanities’ mission, capacity and core competencies, our recommendations for ourselves at this time include:

- Increase our capacity to support peer-to-peer learning, technical assistance, and partnership infrastructure statewide
- Look at the ways in which an equity lens, paired with data, can help inform grantmaking priorities
- Evaluate the possibility of creating and maintaining a public directory of Illinois humanities organizations to bolster a community of practice and to help cross-sector stakeholders connect with local and statewide organizations

For funders

- Understand public humanities organizations as integral to investments in resilience, well-being, community development, and equity
- Support mechanisms for connectivity among organizations with humanities missions
- Invest strengthening organizations’ abilities to reflect local interests and identities and to participate in communities of practice and professional networks
- Invest in organizations’ ability to create, curate, and leverage digital and virtual content
- Consider what proportion of dollars support organizations serving rural communities
- Of special note: relatively small grants ($2,500-$7,500) can have transformative impacts for small organizations, especially when they are in areas overlooked or under-funded by philanthropy traditionally

For policy makers

- Include representatives from public humanities organizations in the development and implementation of policies, particularly public health and community development strategies
- Promote, deploy, network, and hire humanists in recovery planning at the local, regional, and statewide levels
- Quantify and communicate regularly about the economic impact of public humanities organizations, particularly those from rural areas
- Integrate and include humanities organizations in public/private partnerships involving philanthropy and private investors
CONCLUSION

We will need an “all hands on deck” approach to address the plethora of plagues we are facing: COVID-19, racial inequity, economic devastation, and the social isolation these ills foment. Collective efforts are required to address our crises – and will be required for the long haul ahead in mending our shared civic fabric, frayed-for-decades.

As we look towards a post-COVID-19 horizon, what might it mean if we fail to include the very organizations that provide context “for ensuring intervention designs (whether programmatic, policy based, or infrastructural) suit their target populations both culturally and aesthetically?”28

In Illinois, we have an opportunity to redefine the role and invest in the value of public humanities organizations; in doing so we will be better able to imagine and to create a healthier, more connected, and equitable state.
Illinois Humanities awarded 189 grants to 177 unique organizations. The following directory is a snapshot of all the organizations, listing their contact information and grant awarded. To view and download more details about each organization, visit ilhumanities.org/directory.

Directory Key:

- **Organization name**
- **Address**
- **City, State, Zip**
- **County**
- **webaddress**
- **@handle**
- **@handle**
- **Category –**
  - Primary | Secondary type
- **Project –**
  - project webaddress

- Indicates grant received
- General operations
- Program Innovation & Adaptation
- Community Resilience
1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House
409 S Buchanan
PO Box 754
Edwardsville, IL 62025
Madison County
@stephensonhouse.org
@1820StephensonHouse
@benlucystephenson
@Stephenson1820
Category –
History | Education

About Face Theatre Collective
5252 N Broadway Ave Fl2
Chicago, IL 60640
Cook County
aboutfacetheatre.com
@aboutfacetheatre
@aboutfacechi
@aboutfacechi
Category –
Arts | Education

Adler Arts Center
1700 N Milwaukee Ave
Libertyville, IL 60048
Lake County
adlercenter.org
@theadlercenter
@theadlercenter
Category –
Arts | Education

African American Museum of Southern Illinois
1237 E Main St Unit 1046
Carbondale, IL 62901
Jackson County
africanamericanmuseumsi.org
@AAMSICarbondale
Category –
Culture and Heritage | Arts
Project –
youtube.com/channel/UCgiFmaQ7RV3YExj403G81Cg
| africanamericanmuseumsi.org/covid-19-art-project-s.html

African-American Cultural & Genealogical Society of Illinois
235 W Eldorado St
PO Box 25251
Decatur, IL 62525
Macon County
african-american-cultural.org

Al Raby Foundation
7230 S Indiana
Chicago, IL 60619
Cook County
rabyfoundation.org
@rabyfoundation
@rabyfoundation
@rabyfoundation
Category –
Civic and Community Engagement | History

American Blues Theater
4809 N Ravenswood Ste 221
Chicago, IL 60640
Cook County
americanbluestheater.com
@americanbluestheater
@american_blues_theater
@americanbluesth
Category –
Arts | Civic and Community Engagement

American Farm Heritage
1395 Museum Ave
PO Box 606
Greenville, IL 62246
Bond County
americanfarmheritagemuseum.com
@americanfarmheritagemuseum
Category –
History | Culture and Heritage

Artists Reenvisioning Tomorrow
919 NE Jefferson Ave
Peoria, IL 61603
Peoria County
artincpeoria.org

Abe Lincoln Project/Looking for Lincoln in Pike County
PO Box 62
Pittsfield, IL 62363
Pike County
pikelincoln.com
@AbeLincolnProject
Category –
History | Education
Essential Stories: Firefighting in a Pandemic
auroraregionalfiremuseum.org/essential-stories

Backbones
PO Box 7334
Prospect Heights, IL 60070
Cook County
backbonesonline.com
@BACKBONESONLINE
@backbonesonline
@backbonesonline
Category – Civic and Community Engagement | Education
Project – bit.ly/3rx8m3C | bit.ly/3v6iOh9

Ballet Quad Cities
613 17th St
Rock Island, IL 61201
Rock Island County
balletquadcities.com
@balletquadcities
@balletquadcities
@BalletQC
Category – Arts | Education
Project –

Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture
5600 S Pulaski Rd
Chicago, IL 60629
Cook County
balzekasmuseum.org
@Balzekas-Museum-of-Lithuanian-Culture-170807661630, @StanleyBalzekas, @BalticDisplacedPersons
@balzekasmuseum

BECOME: Center for Community Engagement and Social Change
207 E Ohio St
Chicago, IL 60611
Cook County
becomecenter.org
@Become.Inc
Category – Civic and Community Engagement | Education
Project – Maximizing Impact Initiative
youtu.be/EFrjSnRRWPM | bit.ly/3c5FV6k

Bishop Hill Heritage Association
103 N Bishop Hill St
Bishop Hill, IL 61419
Henry County
bishophillheritage.org
@bhheritageassociation
Category – History | Culture and Heritage

Bronzeville Black Chicagoan Historical Society
10 W 35th St Ste 9D3-1
Chicago, IL 60616
Cook County
bronzevillehistoricalsociety.wordpress.com
@BronzevilleHistorical
Category – History | Education

Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods
21850 N Riverwoods Rd
Riverwoods, IL 60015
Lake County
Brushwood Center
329 W 18th St Suite #506
Chicago, IL 60616
Cook County
changingworlds.org
@changingworlds1
@ChangingWorlds1
Category –
Arts | Education
Project –
Changing Worlds
329 W 18th St Suite #506
Chicago, IL 60616
Cook County
changingworlds.org
@changingworlds1
@changingworldschicago
Category –
Arts | Education
Project –
Lake County Leads: Stories of Environmental Justice and Empowerment during COVID-19
brushwoodcenter.org
@BrushwoodCenter
@BrushwoodCenter
@BrushwoodCenter
Category –
Media | Education
Project –
Lake County Leads: Stories of Environmental Justice and Empowerment during COVID-19
bit.ly/2PFDjVf | changingworlds.org/virtual-programs

Cedarville Area Historical Society
450 2nd St
Cedarville, IL 61013
Stephenson County
cedarvilleareahistoricalsociety.org
@CedarvilleHistoricalSociety
@cedarville_historical_society
Category –
History | Education

Center for Racial Harmony
PO Box 296
Belleville, IL 62222
St. Clair County
centerforracialharmony.org
@Center.for.Racial.Harmony.
SaintClairCounty
@Rharmony207
Category –
Civic and Community Engagement | Education

Centralia Area Historical Society
240 S Locust St
Centralia, IL 62801
Marion County
facebook.com/CentraliaAreaHistoricalMuseum
Category –
History | Education

Carbondale Community Arts
304 W Walnut St
Carbondale, IL 62901
Jackson County
carbondalearts.org
@CarbondaleCommunityArts
@carbondalecommunityarts
@CCA62901
Category –
Arts | Education

Bureau County Historical Society
109 Park Ave W
Princeton, IL 61356
Bureau County
bureaucountyhistoricalsociety.com
@Bureau-County-Historical-Society-205135920951
Category –
History | Education

Canal Corridor Association
754 First St
LaSalle, IL 61301
LaSalle County
iandmcanal.org/about-us-canal-corridor-association
@iilmcanal
@iandmcanal
@IMCNHA
Category –
History | Education

Charnley-Persky House Museum
Foundation/Society of Architectural Historians
1365 N Astor St
Chicago, IL 60610
Cook County
sah.org/about-sah/charnley-persky-house
@sah1365
@sah1365
@sah1366
Category –
History | Education

Chicago Blues Museum
PO Box 804423
Chicago, IL 60680
Cook County
bit.ly/3kU2QWu
@Chicago-Blues-Museum-2089041256317
Category –
History | Culture and Heritage

Chicago Collections Consortium
2350 N Kenmore Ave 116D
Chicago, IL 60614
Cook County
chicagocollections.org
@ChiCollections
@chicagocollectionsconsortium
@ChiCollections
Category –
History | Education
Project –
Lake County Leads: Stories of Environmental Justice and Empowerment during COVID-19
bit.ly/3eiiJob | brushwoodcenter.org/lakecountyleads.html
Chicago Cultural Alliance
641 W Lake St #200
Chicago, IL 60661
Cook County

Category –
Culture and Heritage | Civic and Community Engagement
Project –
SOAR (Stories of Arts Resilience)

Chicago for Chicagrans
4954 N Spaulding Ave #2
Chicago, IL 60625
Cook County

Category –
History | Education

Chicago Latino Theater Alliance (CLATA)
180 N Michigan Ave Suite 305
Chicago, IL 60601
Cook County

Category –
Arts | Culture and Heritage

Chicago Poetry Center
641 W Lake Street Suite 200
Chicago, IL 60661
Cook County

Category –
Literature and Writing | Education

Chicago Public Art Group
3314 S Morgan St Unit 1
Chicago, IL 60608
Cook County

Category –
Arts | History
Project –
sofaexpo.com | vimeo.com/491298626

Chicago Youth Shakespeare
641 W Lake St Ste 200
Chicago, IL 60661
Cook County

Category –
Arts | Education

Children’s Theatre of Elgin
1700 Spartan Dr
Elgin, IL 60123
Kane County

Category –
Arts | Education

Collaboraction Theatre Company
PO Box 10085
Chicago, IL 60610
Cook County

Category –
Arts | Civic and Community Engagement
Project –
Peacebook 2020: Essential Perspectives

Colonel Davenport Historical Foundation
PO Box 4603
Rock Island, IL 61204
Rock Island County

coloneldavenporthouse.org

Category –
History | Culture and Heritage

ConTextos
641 W Lake St Suite 200
Chicago, IL 60661
Cook County

Category –
Arts | Culture and Heritage

Cook County

CivicLab
1643 N Larrabee St Unit I
Chicago, IL 60614

Category –
Literature and Writing | Civic and Community Engagement

Project –
Complicating the Narrative: Season Three

contratiempo nfp ©
641 W Lake St Suite 200
Chicago, IL 60661
Cook County
contratiempo.net
@contratiempo
@contratiemposchicago
@revcontratiempo
Category –
Literature and Writing | Culture and Heritage

The Corn Stock Theatre ©
1700 N Park Rd
West Peoria, IL 61604
Peoria County
cornstocktheatre.com
@cornstocktheatre
@CornStockPeoria
Category –
Arts | Education

Crossing Borders Music ©
1330 W Albion Ave Unit G
Chicago, IL 60626
Cook County
crossingbordersmusic.org
@CrossingBordersMusic
Category –
Arts | Culture and Heritage

Crossroads Blues Society ©
PO Box 840
Byron, IL 61010
Ogle County
crossroadsbluessociety.com
@groups/crossroadsbluessociety
@Crossroads_IL
Category –
Arts | Education

Cumberland County Historical & Genealogical Society ©
213 W Cumberland
PO Box 582
Greenup, IL 62428
Cumberland County
cumberlandcountyhistory.org
@cumberlandcountyhistory
Category –
History | Education

David Davis Mansion Foundation ©
1000 Monroe Dr
Bloomington, IL 61701
McLean County
DavidDavisMansion.org
@daviddavismansion
@DavisMansion
Category –
History | Education

Deeply Rooted Dance Theater ©
17 N State 19th Floor
Chicago, IL 60602
Cook County
deeplyrooteddancetheater.org
@DeeplyRootedDanceTheater
@deeplyrooteddance
@drpdance
Category –
Arts | Culture and Heritage

Definition Theatre Company ©
4850 S Drexel
Chicago, IL 60615
Cook County
definitiontheatre.org
@DefinitionTheatre
@DefinitionTheat
Category –
Arts | Education

DeKalb County History Center ©
Location: 1730 N Main St
Mailing: PO Box 502
Sycamore, IL 60178
DeKalb County
dekalbcountyhistory.org
@DeKalbCountyHist
@dekalbhistoriccenter
@DeKalbCountyHis
Category –
History | Education

Design Museum of Chicago ©
72 E Randolph St
Chicago, IL 60601
Cook County
designchicago.org
@designmuseumchi
@designmuseumchi
@designmuseumchi
Category –
Arts | Education

Discovery Depot Children’s Museum ©
128 S Chambers St
Galesburg, IL 61401
Knox County
discoverydepot.org
@Discovery-Depot-356500137182
@discoverydepot1
@discoverydepot2
Category –
Education | Arts
Effingham Public Library
200 N Third St
Effingham, IL 62401
Effingham County
@effinghamlibrary.org
@EffinghamPL
@effinghamlibrary
@Efflibrary
Category –
Arts | History

Easly Pioneer Museum
Foundation
230 W Broadway
Ipava, IL 61441
Fulton County
facebook.com/EasleyPioneerMuseum
Category –
History | Education

East Bluff Community Center
512 E Kansas St
Peoria, IL 61603
Peoria County
eastbluffcommunitycenter.org
Category –
Civic and Community Engagement | Education

Eastlight Theatre
201 Veterans Dr
East Peoria, IL 61611
Tazewell County
eastlighttheatre.com
Category –
Arts | Education

Effingham Public Library
200 N Third St
Effingham, IL 62401
Effingham County
effinghamlibrary.org
@EffinghamPL
@effinghamlibrary
@Efflibrary
Category –
Arts | History

Easly Pioneer Museum
Foundation
230 W Broadway
Ipava, IL 61441
Fulton County
Category –
History | Education

Elgin History Museum
360 Park St
Elgin, IL 60120
Kane County
elginhistory.org
@ElginILHistoryMuseum
@elginhistorymuseum
@elginhistory
Category –
History | Education

Eta Creative Arts Foundation
7558 S South Chicago Ave
Chicago, IL 60619
Cook County
etacreativearts.org
@etacreativearts
@etacreative
Category –
Arts | Culture and Heritage

Ethnic Heritage Museum
1129 S Main St
Rockford, IL 61101
Winnebago County
ethnicheritagemuseum.org
@ethnicheritagemuseum
Category –
Culture and Heritage | History

Fifth House Ensemble
332 S Michigan Ave Ste 121-F501
Chicago, IL 60604
Cook County
fifth-house.com
@fifthhouseensemble
Category –
Arts | Education

Firebrand Theatre
7363 N Ashland Blvd Apt 1
Chicago, IL 60626
Cook County
firebrandtheatre.org
@firebrandtheatrechicago
@firebrand.theatre
@FirebrandChi
Category –
Arts | Civic and Community Engagement

Free Write Arts & Literacy
1932 S Halsted St #100
Chicago, IL 60608
Cook County
freewriteartsliteracy.org
@freewritechicago
@freewritechi
@freewrite
Category –
Arts | Literature and Writing

Full Spectrum Features
fullspectrumfeatures.com
Category –
Media | Civic and Community Engagement

Galena Center for the Arts
971 A Gear St
**Genesius Theatre Foundation**
1120 40th St
Rock Island, IL 61201
Rock Island County

Category –
Arts | Education

**Glessner House**
1800 S Prairie Ave
Chicago, IL 60616
Cook County

Category –
History | Education

**Glidden Homestead and Historical Center**
921 W Lincoln Hwy
DeKalb, IL 60115
DeKalb County

Category –
History | Education

**Global Girls**
8151 S South Chicago Ave
The Global Studio
Chicago, IL 60617
Cook County

Category –
Arts | Civic and Community Engagement

**The Haitian American Museum**
4654 N Racine Ave
Chicago, IL 60640
Cook County

Category –
Arts | Civic and Community Engagement

**Greater Livingston County Arts Council**
209 W Madison St
Pontiac, IL 61764
Livingston County

Category –
Arts | Education

**Gallatin County Historical Society**
434 Main St
Shawneetown, IL 62984
Gallatin County

Category –
History | Education

**General John A. Logan Museum**
1613 Edith St
Murphysboro, IL 62966
Jackson County

Category –
History | Education

**Galesburg Civic Art Center**
114 E Main St
Galesburg, IL 61401
Knox County

Category –
Arts | Education

**Hairpin Arts Center/Logan Square Chamber of Arts**
2810 N Milwaukee Ave 2810 N 2nd Floor
Chicago, IL 60618
Cook County

Category –
Arts | Civic and Community Engagement

**Illinois Humanities**
[ilhumanities.org/covid19report](http://ilhumanities.org/covid19report)
Email: hinckleyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
Category – History | Education

**Historical Society of Quincy and Adams County**
425 S 12th St
Quincy, IL 62301
Adams County
hsqac.org
@hsqac
Category – History | Education

**History Center Lake Forest Lake Bluff**
509 E Deerpath
Lake Forest, IL 60045
Lake County
lflbhistory.org
@lflbhistory
Category – History | Education
Project –
bit.ly/3egUoPU | youtube.com/watch?v=frLqZQNJS8I

**Hoogland Center for the Arts**
420 S Sixth St
Springfield, IL 62701
Sangamon County
d@hcfta.org
@hooglandcenterforthearts
@hcfta
@HCFTA
Category – Arts | Education

**The HUB-Arts and Cultural Center**
210 N Congress St
Rushville, IL 62681
Schuyler County
thehubart.com
@thehubart
@thehubart
@thehubart
Category – Arts | Education

**Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project**
1045 S 5th St
Springfield, IL 62703
Sangamon County
illinoisroute66.org
@ILLRoute66
@illinoisroute66
@ILLRoute66
Category – History | Education

**Illinois Rural Heritage Museum, Inc.**
187 Fairground Rd
PO Box 58
Pinckneyville, IL 62274
Perry County

International Children’s Media Center
625 N Kingsbury St
Chicago, IL 60654
Cook County
icmediacenter.org
@ICMediaCenter
@ICMediaCenter
@ICMediaCenter
Category –
Media | Education

Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art
756 N Milwaukee Ave
Chicago, IL 60642
Cook County
art.org
@intuitartcenter
@intuitartcenter
@intuitartcenter
Category –
Arts | Education

Introduce: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art
756 N Milwaukee Ave
Chicago, IL 60642
Cook County
art.org
@intuitartcenter
@intuitartcenter
@intuitartcenter
Category –
Arts | Education

Illinois State Historical Society
5255 Shepherd Rd
Springfield, IL 62703
Sangamon County
historyillinois.org
@Illinois-State-Historical-Society-112877422100328
Category –
History | Education

Illinois State Museum Society
502 S Spring St
Springfield, IL 62706
Sangamon County
illinoisstatemuseum.org
@IllinoisStateMuseum
@ILStateMuseum
@ILStateMuseum
Category –
History | Arts

Illinois Rural Heritage Museum
902 S Front St
Springfield, IL 62704
Sangamon County
illinoissrhmuseum.org
@Illinois-Rural-Heritage-Museum-106382779425685
Category –
History | Culture and Heritage

Jefferson County Historical Society
1411 N 27th St
Mount Vernon, IL 62864
Jefferson County
historicjeffersoncountyil.com
@jchsil
Category –
History | Education

Joliet Area Historical Museum
204 N Ottawa St
Joliet, IL 60432
Will County
jolietmuseum.org
@JolietMuseum
@jolietmuseum
@Joliet_Museum
Category –
History | Education

Kartemquin Educational Films
1901 W Wellington Ave
Chicago, IL 60657
Cook County
kartemquin.com
@Kartemquin
@kartemquin
@karterquin
Category –
Media | Civic and Community Engagement

Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities
1005 Pennsylvania Ave
East Saint Louis, IL 62201
Mailing:

Imaginative Hillsboro Theater Group
PO Box 234
Hillsboro, IL 62049
Montgomery County
ihtg.org
@pg/ihtheatergroup
Category –
Arts | Civic and Community Engagement

In My Brother’s Shoes
435 W Diversey Pkwy Suite 2
Chicago, IL 60614
Cook County
inmybrothersshoes.org
@inmybrothersshoes
Category –
Media | Civic and Community Engagement

Jacksonville Main Street
PO Box 152
222 W State St
Jacksonville, IL 62651
Morgan County
jacksonvillemainstreet.com
@JacksonvilleMainStreet

Jefferson County Historical Society
1411 N 27th St
Mount Vernon, IL 62864
Jefferson County
historicjeffersoncountyil.com
@jchsil
Category –
History | Education

Joliet Area Historical Museum
204 N Ottawa St
Joliet, IL 60432
Will County
jolietmuseum.org
@JolietMuseum
@jolietmuseum
@Joliet_Museum
Category –
History | Education

Kartemquin Educational Films
1901 W Wellington Ave
Chicago, IL 60657
Cook County
kartemquin.com
@Kartemquin
@kartemquin
@karterquin
Category –
Media | Civic and Community Engagement

Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities
1005 Pennsylvania Ave
East Saint Louis, IL 62201
Mailing:
LaSalle County Historical Society
101 E Canal St Box 278
Utica, IL 61373
LaSalle County
lasallecountyhistoricalsociety.org
@lchsmuseum
@lchs.utica.burgoo
@LaSalleCoMuseum
Category – History | Education

Lawrence County Historical Society
619 12th St
PO Box 425
Lawrenceville, IL 62439
Lawrence County
lawrencelore.org
bit.ly/2ObIOKW
Category – History | Education

Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation
402 S Lincoln Highway Rd
Lerna, IL 62440
Coles County
lincolnlogcabin.org
@lincolnlogcabin
Category – History | Education

Lincoln Highway Interpretive Center
136 N Elm St
Franklin Grove, IL 61031
Lee County
illinoislincolnhighwayassociation.org
@LincolnHighway
@LincolnHwyAssoc
Category – History | Arts

LaGrange Area Historical Society
444 S La Grange Rd
La Grange, IL 60525
Cook County
lagrangehistory.org
@Lagrangehistorical
Category – History | Education

Korean Cultural Center of Chicago
9930 Capitol Dr
Wheeling, IL 60090
Cook County
kccoc.org/wps/en
@kccoc
@kccoc_chicago
Category – Culture and Heritage | Arts

Kuumba Lynx
4501 N Clarendon Ave
Chicago, IL 60640
Cook County
kuumbalynx.com
@kuumbalynx20
@Kuumbalynx
Category – Arts | Civic and Community Engagement
Project – SPROUT (Spitting Powerful Rhymes Organically Unleashing Truths)
kuumbalynx.com/asiam

LaGrange Area Historical Society
444 S La Grange Rd
La Grange, IL 60525
Cook County
lagrangehistory.org
@Lagrangehistorical
Category – History | Education

Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation
402 S Lincoln Highway Rd
Lerna, IL 62440
Coles County
lincolnlogcabin.org
@lincolnlogcabin
Category – History | Education

Lincoln Highway Interpretive Center
136 N Elm St
Franklin Grove, IL 61031
Lee County
illinoislincolnhighwayassociation.org
@LincolnHighway
@LincolnHwyAssoc
Category – History | Arts

Korean Cultural Center of Chicago
4641 N Ashland Ave
Chicago, IL 60640
Cook County
kccoc.org/wps/en
@kccoc
@kccoc_chicago
Category – Culture and Heritage | Arts

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4501 N Clarendon Ave
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@kuumbalynx20
@Kuumbalynx
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kuumbalynx.com/asiam

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Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation
402 S Lincoln Highway Rd
Lerna, IL 62440
Coles County
lincolnlogcabin.org
@lincolnlogcabin
Category – History | Education

Lincoln Highway Interpretive Center
136 N Elm St
Franklin Grove, IL 61031
Lee County
illinoislincolnhighwayassociation.org
@LincolnHighway
@LincolnHwyAssoc
Category – History | Arts

Korean Cultural Center of Chicago
9930 Capitol Dr
Wheeling, IL 60090
Cook County
kccoc.org/wps/en
@kccoc
@kccoc_chicago
Category – Culture and Heritage | Arts

Kuumba Lynx
4501 N Clarendon Ave
Chicago, IL 60640
Cook County
kuumbalynx.com
@kuumbalynx20
@Kuumbalynx
Category – Arts | Civic and Community Engagement
Project – SPROUT (Spitting Powerful Rhymes Organically Unleashing Truths)
kuumbalynx.com/asiam

LaGrange Area Historical Society
444 S La Grange Rd
La Grange, IL 60525
Cook County
lagrangehistory.org
@Lagrangehistorical
Category – History | Education

Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation
402 S Lincoln Highway Rd
Lerna, IL 62440
Coles County
lincolnlogcabin.org
@lincolnlogcabin
Category – History | Education

Lincoln Highway Interpretive Center
136 N Elm St
Franklin Grove, IL 61031
Lee County
illinoislincolnhighwayassociation.org
@LincolnHighway
@LincolnHwyAssoc
Category – History | Arts

Korean Cultural Center of Chicago
9930 Capitol Dr
Wheeling, IL 60090
Cook County
kccoc.org/wps/en
@kccoc
@kccoc_chicago
Category – Culture and Heritage | Arts

Kuumba Lynx
4501 N Clarendon Ave
Chicago, IL 60640
Cook County
kuumbalynx.com
@kuumbalynx20
@Kuumbalynx
Category – Arts | Civic and Community Engagement
Project – SPROUT (Spitting Powerful Rhymes Organically Unleashing Truths)
kuumbalynx.com/asiam

LaGrange Area Historical Society
444 S La Grange Rd
La Grange, IL 60525
Cook County
lagrangehistory.org
@Lagrangehistorical
Category – History | Education

Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation
402 S Lincoln Highway Rd
Lerna, IL 62440
Coles County
lincolnlogcabin.org
@lincolnlogcabin
Category – History | Education

Lincoln Highway Interpretive Center
136 N Elm St
Franklin Grove, IL 61031
Lee County
illinoislincolnhighwayassociation.org
@LincolnHighway
@LincolnHwyAssoc
Category – History | Arts
Macoupin County Historical Society  
920 W Breckenridge St  
Carlinville, IL 62626  
Macoupin County  
@MacoupinCountyHistoricalSociety  
Category –  
History | Education

McLean County Museum of History  
200 N Main St  
Bloomington, IL 61701  
McLean County  
@mchistory.org  
@McLeanCountyMuseumofHistory  
@mchistorymuseum  
@mchistorymuseum  
Category –  
History | Education

Media Burn Archive  
935 W Chestnut St Ste 405  
Chicago, IL 60642  
Cook County  
@mediaburn.org  
@mediaburnvideo  
@mediaburnarchive  
@mediaburnvideo  
Category –  
Media | Civic and Community Engagement

Mexican Cultural Center  
103 W Washington St  
West Chicago, IL 60185  
DuPage County  
@MexicanCulturalCenterDuPage  
@MexicanCultural  
Category –  
Culture and Heritage | Civic and Community Engagement

Midway Village Museum  
6799 Guilford Rd  
Rockford, IL 61107  
Winnebago County  
@MidwayVillage  
Category –  
History | Education

Midwest Writing Center  
401 19th St  
c/o RIPL  
Rock Island, IL 61201  
Rock Island County  
@MidwestWritingCenter  
@mwccq.org  
@mediaburn.org  
@mediaburnvideo  
@mediaburnarchive  
@mediaburnvideo  
Category –  
Literature and Writing | Education

Mitchell Museum of the American Indian  
3001 Central St  
Evanston, IL 60201  
Cook County  
@mitchellmuseum.org  
@mitchellmuseum  
Category –  
Culture and Heritage | History

Museum of the Grand Prairie  
950 N Lombard St  
Mahomet, IL 61853  
Champaign County  
@musgrandprairie  
@museumofthegrandprairie  
@museumofthegrandprairie  
@musgrandprairie  
Category –  
History | Education

Project –  
bit.ly/3rpK8lv  
bit.ly/3eeHqC0
Musical Arts Institute
9244 S Lafayette
Chicago, IL 60620
Cook County
musicalartsinstitute.org
@musicalartsinstitute
@musicalartsinstitute_mai
@MusicalArtsInst
Category –
Arts | Education

National Public Housing Museum
625 N Kingsbury St
Chicago, IL 60647
Cook County
nphm.org
@thenphm
@the_nphm
@the_nphm
Category –
Culture and Heritage | Media
Project –
nphm.org
http://bit.ly/3v0jVCN

NON:op Open Opera Works
2419 N Drake Ave FL 1
Chicago, IL 60647
Cook County
nonopera.org
@NONopera
@nonopera
@nonopera
Category –
Arts | Civic and Community
Engagement

Old School Museum
110 E Cherry
Winchester, IL 62694
Scott County
oldschoolmuseum.org
@OldSchoolMuseumIL
Category –
History | Education

OPEN Center for the Arts
2214 S Sacramento
Chicago, IL 60623
Cook County
opencenterforthearts.org
@OPENcenterforthearts
@opencenterforthearts
@OpenCenterArts
Category –
Education | Civic and Community

P.A.S.T. of Union County
102 S Main
Jonesboro, IL 62920
Union County
@friendsofpast
Category –
History | Culture and Heritage

The Paper Machete Group
1133 W Pratt Blvd Unit 2
Chicago, IL 60626
Cook County
thepapermachete.org
@thepapermachete
@thepapermachete
@thepapermachete
Category –
Arts | Media

Peoria Historical Society
611 SW Washington St
Peoria, IL 61602
Peoria County
peoriahistoricalsociety.com
@PeoriaHistoricalSociety
@PeoriaHistorica
Category –
History | Education
Project –
pelialriverfrontmuseum.org/
posts/1500

Pilot Light
1516 W Carroll Ave Ste 1
Chicago, IL 60607
Cook County
pilotlightchefs.org
@pilotlightchefs
@pilotlightchefs
@pilotlightchefs
Category –
Education | Civic and Community

March 2021 Illinois Humanities
Engagement

PlayMakers Laboratory
4021 N Broadway Suite 1
Chicago, IL 60613
Cook County
playmakerslab
playmakerslab
PMLaboratory
@playmakerslab
@playmakerslab
@PMLaboratory
Category –
Media | Arts

Puerto Rican Arts Alliance
3000 N Elbridge
Chicago, IL 60618
Cook County
praachicago.org
@PuertoRicanArtsAlliance
@puertoricanartsalliance
@PRAACHICAGO
Category –
Culture and Heritage | Arts

Quad Cities Jazz Festival
719 17th St
PO Box 166
East Moline, IL 61244
Rock Island County
facebook.com/polyjazzheritagefest
Category –
Arts | Civic and Community
Engagement

The Raupp Museum
530 Bernard Dr
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089
Cook County
rauppuseum.omeka.net
@RauppMuseum
Category –
History | Education

Que4 Radio
2643 W Chicago
Chicago, IL 60622
Cook County
que4.org
@Quennect4Tribe
@que4radio
Category –
Arts | Education

Red Mask Players
Location: 601 N Vermilion
Mailing: PO Box 814
Danville, IL 61834
Vermilion County
redmaskplayers.com
@redmaskplayersinc
Category –
Arts | Education

Redick Mansion Association
100 W Lafayette St
Ottawa, IL 61350
LaSalle County
reddickmansion.org
Media | Culture and Heritage

Ray Bradbury Experience Museum
13 N Genesee St
Waukegan, IL 60085
Lake County
raybradburyexperiencemuseum.org
@RBEMuseum
@rbemuseum
@RBEMuseum
Category –
History | Literature and writing
Project –
raybradburyexperiencemuseum.org/centennial

Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County
44 E Washington St
Champaign, IL 61820
Champaign County
pacacc.org
bit.ly/3v2lwYM
@paca_champaign
Category –
History | Civic and Community Engagement

Preservation of Egyptian Theatre
135 N 2nd St
DeKalb, IL 60115
DeKalb County
eyptiantheatre.org
dekalbegyptiantheatre
eyptiantheatre
eyptiantheatre
@eyptiantheatre
Category –
History | Arts

Public Media Institute
3219 S Morgan St
Chicago, IL 60608
Cook County
publicmediainstitute.com
lumpenradio, @coprosperitychicago
lumpenradio,
coprosperitychicago,lumpenradio)
@lumpenradio
Media | Culture and Heritage
Carroll County
Carroll County
svannamuseum.org
savannamuseum.org
Category – History | Culture and heritage
Project – COVID-19 Community Conversations
savannamuseum.org/home-1

Shabbona-Lee-Rollo Historical Museum
Shabbona-Lee-Rollo Historical Museum
119 W Comanche
Shabbona, IL 60550
DeKalb County
slrmuseum.com
@slrmuseum
Category – History | Education

Silent Theatre Company
Silent Theatre Company
4154 N Tripp Ave #1
Chicago, IL 60641
Cook County
silenttheatre.com
@silenttheatrechicago
@silenttheatre
Category – Arts | Media

Silk Road Rising
Silk Road Rising
150 N Michigan Ave Ste 1970
Chicago, IL 60601
Cook County
silkradrising.org
@SilkRoadRising
@Silk_Road
Category – Culture and Heritage | Arts

Sixty Inches From Center
Sixty Inches From Center
436 E 47th St #308
Chicago, IL 60653
Cook County
sixtyinchesfromcenter.org
SixtyInchesFromCenter
@sixtyinchesfromcenter
@fromthecenter
Category – History | Media

South Side Community Art Center
South Side Community Art Center
3831 S Michigan
Chicago, IL 60653
Cook County
sscartcenter.org
SouthSideCommunityArtCenter
@sscartcenter
Category – Arts | Culture and Heritage

South Side Weekly
South Side Weekly
6100 S Blackstone Ave
Chicago, IL 60608
Cook County
southsideweekly.com
southsideweekly
southsideweekly
southsideweekly
Category – Media | Education
Project – Envisioning New Futures
bit.ly/3esK4UG | bit.ly/3qtIc0g

Springfield Theatre Centre
Springfield Theatre Centre
420 S 6th St
Springfield, IL 62701
Sangamon County
springfieldtheatrecentre.com
SpringfieldTheatreCentre
@springfield_theatre_centre
Category – Arts | Education
St. Charles History Museum
215 E Main St
St. Charles, IL 60174
Kane County
stcmuseum.org
@StCharlesHistoryMuseum
@stc_history
@STCHistoryMus
Category –
History | Culture and heritage

St. Clair County Historical Society
701 E Washington St
Belleville, IL 62220
St. Clair County
stcchs.org
@stch
@STCCHS
Category –
History | Culture and heritage

Stark County Historical Society
318 W Jefferson
PO Box 524
Toulon, IL 61483
Stark County
facebook.com/StarkCountyHistoricalSociety
@starkcountyhistoricalsociety
Category –
History | Education

Stephenson County Historical Society
1440 S Carroll Ave
Freeport, IL 61032
Stephenson County
stephcohs.org
@StephCoHS
@stephcohs
@StephensonCoHS
Category –
History | Culture and heritage

Still Point Theatre Collective
4300 N Hermitage Ave
Chicago, IL 60613
Cook County
stillpointtheatrecollective.org
@SPTCchicago
@stillpointofficenetwork
Category –
Arts | Civic and Community Engagement

Strategy for Access Foundation
4800 S Chicago Beach Dr Suite 1707s
Chicago, IL 60615
Cook County
fun4thedisabled.com
@fun4thedisabled
@fun4thedisabled
@fun4thedisabled
Category –
Media | Civic and Community Engagement

Tazewell County Genealogical & Historical Society
719 N 11th St
PO Box 312
Pekin, IL 61555
Tazewell County
tcghs.org
bit.ly/30pPAPH
Category –
History | Education

Thebes Historical Society
519 Sunset Dr
Marion, IL 62959
Williamson County
thecourthouse.com
@ThebesCourthouse
Category –
History | Education

Stark County Historical Society
318 W Jefferson
PO Box 524
Toulon, IL 61483
Stark County
facebook.com/StarkCountyHistoricalSociety
@starkcountyhistoricalsociety
Category –
History | Education

Stephenson County Historical Society
1440 S Carroll Ave
Freeport, IL 61032
Stephenson County
stephcohs.org
@StephCoHS
@stephcohs
@StephensonCoHS
Category –
History | Culture and heritage

Third Coast International Audio Festival dba Third Coast
PO Box 410726
Chicago, IL 60641
Cook County
thirdcoastfestival.org
@thirdcoastfest
@thirdcoastfest
@thirdcoastfest
Category –
Media | Education

The Ukrainian National Museum
2249 W Superior St
Chicago, IL 60612
Cook County
ukrainiannationalmuseum.org
@UkrainianNationalMuseum
@ukrainiannationalmuseum
@UkrNatlMuseum
Category –
Culture and Heritage | History

Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center
202 S Broadway Ave #100
Urbana, IL 61801
Champaign County
ucimc.org
@ucimc
@uc.imc
@UCIMC
Category –
Media | Arts

The Vegan Museum
2100 N Racine Ave Unit 3B
Chicago, IL 60614
Cook County
veganmuseum.org
@thevegmuseum
@thevegmuseum
@thevegmuseum
Category –
History | Education
Project –
▶️ [wimuseum.org](https://wimuseum.org)
▶️ [@wimuseum](https://twitter.com/wimuseum)
▶️ [@wimuseum](https://instagram.com/wimuseum)
**Category –**
History | Culture and heritage

**Wheels O’ Time Museum**
1710 W Woodside Dr
Dunlap, IL 61525
Peoria County
▶️ [wheelsotime.org](https://wheelsotime.org)
▶️ [@wheelsotimemuseum](https://twitter.com/wheelsotimemuseum)
▶️ [@wheelsotime](https://instagram.com/wheelsotime)
**Category –**
History | Education

**Williamson County Historical Society**
105 S Van Buren St
Marion, IL 62959
Williamson County
▶️ [wcihs.org](https://wcihs.org)
▶️ [@wchsillinois](https://twitter.com/wchsillinois)
**Category –**
History

**Youth Rock Carbondale (Libre)**
215 N Washington Ave
Carbondale, IL 62901
Jackson County
▶️ [yallrockcarbondale.com](https://yallrockcarbondale.com)
▶️ [@yallrock618](https://twitter.com/yallrock618)
▶️ [@yallrock618](https://instagram.com/yallrock618)
**Category –**
Arts | Education

**Western Illinois Museum**
201 S Lafayette St
Macomb, IL 61455
McDonough County
▶️ [wimuseum.org](https://wimuseum.org)
▶️ [@wimuseum](https://twitter.com/wimuseum)
▶️ [@wimuseum](https://instagram.com/wimuseum)
**Category –**
History | Culture and heritage

The Voices and Faces Project
47 W Polk St Ste #170
Chicago, IL 60605
Cook County
▶️ [voicesandfaces.org](https://voicesandfaces.org)
▶️ [@TheVoicesandFacesProject](https://twitter.com/TheVoicesandFacesProject)
▶️ [@thevoicesandfacesProject](https://instagram.com/thevoicesandfacesProject)
▶️ [VoicesandFaces](https://twitter.com/VoicesandFaces)
**Category –**
Literature and Writing | Civic and Community Engagement
Project –
▶️ [voicesandfaces.org/workshop](https://voicesandfaces.org/workshop)
▶️ [voicesandfaces.org/lectures-trainings](https://voicesandfaces.org/lectures-trainings)

Wabash Roots’n’Que Festival
801 W 9th St
PO Box 305
Mt Carmel, IL 62863
Wabash County
▶️ [rootsnque.com](https://rootsnque.com)
▶️ [MarketStreetMTC](https://twitter.com/MarketStreetMTC)
**Category –**
Arts | Education

**Washington County Historical Society**
326 S Kaskaskia St
PO Box 9
Nashville, IL 62263
Washington County
**Category –**
History | Education
Appendices

Grantee partner list
Organized by grant type

General operating support
Listed by organization name and county

1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House, Madison 6018North, Cook
826CHI, Cook
Abe Lincoln Project/Looking for Lincoln in Pike County, Pike
About Face Theatre Collective, Cook
Adler Arts Center, Lake
African American Cultural & Genealogical Society of Illinois, Macon
Al Raby Foundation, Cook
American Blues Theater, Cook
American Farm Heritage, Bond
Artists Reenvisioning Tomorrow, Peoria
Aurora Historical Society, Kane
Aurora Regional Fire Museum, Kane
Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, Cook
Bishop Hill Heritage Association, Henry
Bronzeville Black Chicagoan Historical Society, Cook
Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods, Lake
Bureau County Historical Society, Bureau
Canal Corridor Association, LaSalle
Carbondale Community Arts, Jackson
Cedarville Area Historical Society, Stephenson
Center for Racial Harmony, St. Clair
Centralia Area Historical Society, Marion
Charnley-Persky House Museum Foundation/ Society of Architectural Historians, Cook
Chicago Blues Museum, Cook
Chicago for Chicagoans, Cook
Chicago Latino Theater Alliance (CLATA), Cook
Chicago Poetry Center, Cook
Chicago Youth Shakespeare, Cook
Children's Theatre of Elgin, Kane
CivicLab, Cook
Collaboraction Theatre Company, Cook
Colonel Davenport Theatre Company, Rock Island
contratiempo nfp, Cook
Crossing Borders Music, Cook
Crossroads Blues Society, Ogle
Cumberland County Historical & Genealogical Society, Cumberland
David Davis Mansion Foundation, McLean
Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Cook
Definition Theatre Company, Cook
DeKalb County History Center, DeKalb
Design Museum of Chicago, Cook
Easley Pioneer Museum Foundation, Fulton
East Bluff Community Center, Peoria
Eastlight Theatre, Tazewell
Elgin History Museum, Kane
eta Creative Arts Foundation, Cook
Ethnic Heritage Museum, Winnebago
Fifth House Ensemble, Cook
Firebrand Theatre, Cook
Free Write Arts & Literacy, Cook
Full Spectrum Features, Cook
Galena Center for the Arts, Jo Daviess
Galesburg Civic Art Center, Knox
Gallatin County Historical Society, Gallatin
General John A. Logan Museum, Jackson
Genesius Theatre Foundation, Rock Island
Glessner House, Cook
Glidden Homestead and Historical Center, DeKalb
Global Girls, Cook
Greater Livingston County Arts Council, Livingston
Guild Literary Complex, Cook
Hairpin Arts Center/Logan Square Chamber of Arts, Cook
Hamilton Wings, Kane
Hegeler-Carus Foundation, LaSalle
Heterodyne Broadcasting/WDBX Radio, Jackson
Hinckley Historical Society, DeKalb
Historical Society of Quincy and Adams County, Adams
Hoogland Center for the Arts, Sangamon
Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project, Sangamon
Illinois Rural Heritage Museum, Inc., Perry
Illinois State Historical Society, Sangamon
Illinois State Museum Society, Sangamon
Imagine Hillsboro Theater Group, Montgomery
In My Brother's Shoes, Cook
International Children's Media Center, Cook
Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, Cook
Iroquois County Historical Society, Iroquois
Jacksonville Main Street, Morgan
Jefferson County Historical Society, Jefferson
Joliet Area Historical Museum, Will
Kartemquin Educational Films, Cook
Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities, St. Clair
Korean Cultural Center of Chicago, Cook
Kuumba Lynx, Cook
La Grange Area Historical Society, Cook
LaSalle County Historical Society, LaSalle
Lawrence County Historical Society, Lawrence
Lincoln Heritage Museum, Logan
Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation, Coles
Lithuanian Archives Project, Cook
Livingston County Historical Society, Livingston
Macoupin County Historical Society, Macoupin
Madison County Historical Society, Madison
Magnolia Township Preservation Association, Putnam
McHenry County Historical Society & Museum, McHenry
McLean County Museum of History, McLean
Media Burn Archive, Cook
Midway Village Museum, Winnebago
Midwest Writing Center, Rock Island
Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, Cook
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Champaign
Musical Arts Institute, Cook
Muslim American Leadership Alliance, Cook
MWAH! Performing Arts Troupe, DuPage
NAJWA Dance Corps, Cook
Non:op Open Opera Works, Cook
Old School Museum, Scott
OPEN Center for the Arts, Cook
P.A.S.T. of Union County, Union
Pilot Light, Cook
PlayMakers Laboratory, Cook
Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County, Champaign
Preservation of Egyptian Theatre, DeKalb
Public Media Institute, Cook
Puerto Rican Arts Alliance, Cook
Quad Cities Jazz Festival, Rock Island
Que4 Radio, Cook
Red Mask Players, Vermilion
Reddick Mansion Association, LaSalle
Robbins Historical Society Museum, Cook
Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home, Lee
Savanna Museum & Cultural Center, Carroll
Shabbona-Lee-Rollo Historical Museum, DeKalb
Silent Theatre Company, Cook
Silk Road Rising, Cook
Sixty Inches From Center, Cook
South Side Community Art Center, Cook
South Side Weekly, Cook
Springfield Theatre Centre, Sangamon
St. Charles History Museum, Kane
St. Clair County Historical Society, St. Clair
Stark County Historical Society, Stark
Stephenson County Historical Society, Stephenson
Still Point Theatre Collective, Cook
Strategy for Access Foundation, Cook
Tazewell County Genealogical & Historical Society, Tazewell
The Corn Stock Theatre, Peoria
The Haitian American Museum, Cook
The HUB-Arts and Cultural Center, Schuyler
The Paper Machete Group, Cook
The Raupp Museum, Cook
The Rebuild Foundation, Cook
The Ukrainian National Museum, Cook
Thebes Historical Society, Williamson
Third Coast International Audio Festival dba Third Coast, Cook
Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center, Champaign
Wabash Roots'n'Que Festival, Wabash
Washington County Historical Society, Washington
Western Illinois Museum, McDonough
Wheels O’ Time Museum, Peoria
Williamson County Historical Society, Williamson
Young Chicago Authors, Cook

Program innovation & adaptation
Listed by organization name and county

African American Museum of Southern Illinois, Jackson
Backbones, Cook
Ballet Quad Cities, Rock Island
Changing Worlds, Cook
Chicago Collections Consortium, Cook
Chicago Public Art Group, Cook
Discovery Depot Children's Museum, Knox
History Center Lake Forest Lake Bluff, Lake
Honey Pot Performance, Cook
Lincoln Highway Interpretive Center, Lee
Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition, Sangamon
Mexican Cultural Center, DuPage

Museum of the Grand Prairie, Champaign
National Public Housing Museum, Cook
Peoria Historical Society, Peoria
Ray Bradbury Experience Museum, Lake
Repertorio Latino Theater Company, Cook
The Vegan Museum, Cook
The Voices and Faces Project, Cook
Y’all Rock Carbondale (Libre), Jackson

Community resilience
Listed by organization name and county

Atlanta Public Library and Museum, Logan
Aurora Regional Fire Museum, Kane
BECOME: Center for Community Engagement and Social Change, Cook
Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods, Lake
Carbondale Community Arts, Jackson
Changing Worlds, Cook
Chicago Cultural Alliance, Cook
Collaboration Theatre Company, Cook
ConTextos, Cook
Effingham Public Library, Effingham
Full Spectrum Features, Cook
Galena Center for the Arts, Jo Daviess
Kuumba Lynx, Cook
Savanna Museum & Cultural Center, Carroll
South Side Weekly, Cook

Illinois Humanities’ approach to grantmaking

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) received $75 million in supplemental funding to assist humanities and cultural institutions affected by COVID-19 as part of the CARES Act. As the state affiliate for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Illinois Humanities was able to award $710K in COVID-19 relief dollars comprised of primarily CARES funds and supplemented with repurposed general operating and specialized fundraising efforts.
The Illinois Humanities team set out to move dollars out the door quickly and efficiently with minimal barriers to applicants. Given Illinois Humanities’ mission to ensure access to the humanities statewide, having a broad-based and geographically diverse applicant pool was a priority. This priority became more urgent as public health lockdowns began to impact organizations’ services and, in some cases, staffing and overall viability. For instance, Illinois Humanities recognized the importance of supporting rural communities which traditionally receive fewer philanthropic dollars. This decision took on additional weight upon realization that general CARES funding was restricted to municipalities with populations of more than 500,000.

An early decision was made to prioritize cultural nonprofit organizations with operating budgets of less than $1.5 million and to encourage statewide applications by creating discrete Emergency Relief Grant portals: one for organizations based in Cook County (where roughly 41% of the state’s population resides) and one for organizations based outside of Cook County. These relief grants served as singular opportunities for many organizations who were unable or ineligible to apply for other source of federal, state or private philanthropic support due to size, location, or capacity.

Illinois Humanities COVID-19 relief funding opportunities were available in three distinct rounds between April 8, 2020 and June 15, 2020. Organizations were eligible to apply for more than one grant.

- General Operating Grants provided emergency relief support for humanities-based organizations throughout the state impacted by COVID-19. $495,000 for General Operating Grants was awarded to 154 organizations in sums of $2,500-$7,500, based on budget size.

- Program Innovation and Adaptation grants enabled humanities-based organizations to innovate, adapt, and strengthen access to their programming. $100,000 for Program Innovation and Adaptation was awarded to 20 organizations in sums of $5,000 each.

- Community Resilience grants supported humanities-based efforts to make community experiences during the pandemic visible and highlight resiliency throughout the state. $90,000 were awarded to 15 organizations in sums of $6,000 each.

Illinois Humanities targeted outreach to underserved communities both within and outside of Cook County. On April 29, 2020, in partnership with Illinois Arts Council Agency (IACA), Illinois Humanities co-hosted a virtual event for arts and humanities organizations across Illinois to discuss the opportunities for CARES Act funding. Illinois Humanities promoted grant opportunities through social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), monthly newsletters, announcements in local newspapers, and extensive outreach emails to grantee partners, former grantee partners, past program participants, and statewide associations including the Illinois Library Association and Illinois Association of Museums.
Endnotes


4 This report draws frequently on research exploring Arts and Culture organizational impacts. Research about “humanities organizations” is notably absent from the literature base. However, “Arts and Culture”-based research (which, for the purposes of this report, includes arts and cultural production, creative placemaking, research about the impact of COVID-19 on arts and culture organization etc.) consistently includes and integrates humanities organizations and humanities activities (i.e. history museums and historic sites; poetry and literature; dialogues and facilitated conversations; cultural and ethnic awareness, heritage museums; broadcasting, publishing; musical interpretation; post-performance “talk-backs,” etc.).


12 Data and Analysis

Internal Illinois Humanities data and grantee partner organization data:
• “Final report” tables summarizing responses from forms completed by all 177 grantee partners.
• Grant application tables including responses from the 576 applications.
• Tables compiled from emails and other communications with grantees including organizations’ selection of their categories and confirmation of how their data is represented in this report.

External data:
• United States Census Bureau: Population data; geographical boundaries for counties, zip codes, and congressional districts; and urban/rural classifications.
• Forefront / Candid: Tables and PDF reports pertaining to philanthropy in Illinois.
• GuideStar: Nonprofit database information such as year founded.
• United Way: ALICE measurement for income and poverty.
• Illinois Department of Public Health: COVID-19 data by zip code.

13 Data analysis process. The project team asked grantee partners to provide information about their organizations through applications, surveys, and reports about and how grant funds were used. The team gathered additional contextual data from the external sources listed in the data section. Second, these data were organized and combined in R, a programming language for statistics and data visualization. Third, the team performed a variety of analyses using the data. Analyses were conducted in R. Fourth, organizations and grants were mapped in Esri ArcGIS Pro, a geographic information systems (GIS) software tool. Fifth, results from analyses in R and ArcGIS were combined and visualized using R and the Adobe Creative Suite. This resulted in the maps, charts, and other visualizations in this report. Sixth (and lastly), the team wrote the narrative for this report based on the analysis results and based on many meetings, emails, and phone conversations with grantee partners.

14 Organizations reported these impacts in Sept/Oct 2020. Impacts may have changed as the pandemic continues.


16 Staff attribute the robustness of this diversity of grantee partners to a combination of the duress experienced and targeted outreach efforts.

17 All nonprofit organizations have an NTEE code (available through GuideStar and other publically-accessible documentation) that categorizes their primary function.


19 Forefront and Candid, “Giving in Illinois,” 6. According to Forefront, Illinois foundation giving reached a record $5.1 billion in 2017. The top Illinois funding priorities for foundation giving in 2017 were education, health and human services. Cook County garnered the largest share of foundation support. Recipients in Cook County benefited from 78% of grant dollars awarded to recipients in the state and 71% of the number of grants.


31 See Directory for grantee partners by grant type.


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Bibliography


humanities-scholars-enlisted-end-coronavirus-lockdown.


On Wisdom and Vision: Humanities Organizations in Illinois during COVID-19

125 S Clark St #650
Chicago, Illinois 60603
ilhumanities.org/covid19report