



RHODE ISLAND
HUMANITIES

By and For All Rhode Islanders:

Rhode Island Humanities Strategic Plan

2023 - 2026

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By and For All Rhode Islanders:

Rhode Island Humanities Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026

Approved by the Board of Directors September 11, 2023

Introduction

“*By and For All Rhode Islanders: Rhode Island Humanities Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026*” prioritizes four goals that will guide our actions over the next three years.

- *Develop our operations and organization to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.*
- *Strengthen Rhode Island’s cultural sector and civic health through our grantmaking and humanities initiatives.*
- *Implement engagement that prioritizes community perspectives, connects the humanities to societal challenges, inspires the public, and networks constituencies.*
- *Develop an equitable and inclusive culture of giving to express and advance our goals, vision, and values.*

The plan’s title, “*By and For All Rhode Islanders,*” is taken from our mission statement and inspires our vision and values. When we recognize the humanities as by and for everyone, our communities are healthier and our democracy is stronger.

Through our previous strategic plan, “*Catalyzing the Humanities in Rhode Island, 2014-2019,*” Rhode Island Humanities built an organizational foundation of grantmaking, partnerships, and initiatives that empowered us to innovate, increase our impact, and expand our network. In 2020, with the uncertainty wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic and a societal sense of renewed urgency for the racial justice movement, we developed an interim strategic plan to look deeply at our organizational culture, practices, and structure.

“*By and For All Rhode Islanders*” incorporates what we have learned during this transformational time. It includes our mission, vision, and values, the four overarching goals

with key indicators of progress, and our strategy for evaluation. It is accompanied by a detailed action plan focused on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA). To fulfill our mission to seed, support, and strengthen humanities *by and for all Rhode Islanders*, we will invest in methods that reach diverse audiences and communities through inclusive and accessible means, while working to overcome inequities and barriers to better resource historically underserved communities.

Mission — *Our fundamental purpose*

Rhode Island Humanities seeds, supports, and strengthens public history, cultural heritage, civic education, and community engagement by and for all Rhode Islanders.

Vision — *Our aspirations and hopes for the future*

Rhode Island Humanities will contribute to the development of an inclusive culture of belonging for all people in Rhode Island, while actively encouraging Rhode Islanders to engage with the complexity of the state’s history, current challenges, and future possibilities. We are committed to drawing in and amplifying many voices to explore historical and contemporary issues, as well as celebrating multifaceted perspectives and approaches. We seek to inspire participation in community, promote conversation and difficult dialogues, and establish the basis for shared understanding that also acknowledges differences.

Values — *Our core principles that guide how we act and what we do*

Our core values are *Relevance, Collaboration, and Community*.

Relevance

Our work will address needs identified within the cultural sector and promote models for the practice of public humanities. We’re committed to learning and adapting in order to best serve the state.

Collaboration

Rhode Island Humanities believes that strong partnerships with other organizations and humanities practitioners can expand reach and collective impact. We aim to connect individuals and organizations in the cultural sector in meaningful and forward-looking ways. Our collaborations and partnerships will be based on shared commitment, trust, clear definitions and organizational structures, and mutual benefits. We prioritize collaborations and partnerships that create greater equity in and through the humanities.

Community

Rhode Island Humanities seeks to be welcoming, inclusive, and accessible to the perspectives and experiences of Rhode Islanders. We emphasize the importance of participation in humanities, arts, and cultural activities for Rhode Island’s overall civic health.

Goals — *How we plan to fulfill our mission, express our values, and achieve our vision*

Goal #1: Develop our operations and organization to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility

Rhode Island Humanities will examine core practices—from its internal operations and organizational culture to the practices of grantmaking, initiatives, engagement, and fundraising—guided by our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Action Plan. We will establish specific goals to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) and undertake regular evaluation of progress toward those goals.

Key indicators of progress:

- Articulating and making specific changes in organizational culture to foster trust, clarity, belonging and well-being among and between the staff and the board.
- Making specific changes in our staff and board policies and guidelines based on the DEIA Action Plan.
- Implementing specific DEIA goals throughout our public work.

Goal #2: Strengthen Rhode Island’s cultural sector and civic health through our grantmaking and humanities initiatives

Rhode Island Humanities will holistically assess and reimagine our grantmaking to ensure equitable and accessible programs that provide needed resources for diverse humanities practitioners and organizations across the state. This support will sustain these practitioners and organizations in offering humanities programs, experiences, and resources by and for all Rhode Islanders.

In its humanities initiatives, Rhode Island Humanities will advance collective understanding of and coalition-building around Rhode Island’s civic health, and in particular, the critical role of the humanities sector in this area. Our initiatives will also focus on creating collective resources, shared infrastructure, and common frameworks for the state’s cultural sector to advance civic health and articulate collective impact.

Key indicators of progress:

- Implementing changes to our federally funded grantmaking program that increase equity, accessibility, and state-wide reach.
- Establishing a general operating support grantmaking program for humanities organizations through opening new, additional revenue streams
- Articulating and amplifying the importance of civic health, and the importance of the humanities sector to strengthening civic health, through projects and partnerships
- Developing collective resources, shared infrastructure and collective frameworks for the cultural sector to connect and collaborate, as well as assess and communicate collective impact.

Goal #3: Implement engagement that prioritizes community perspectives, connects the humanities to societal challenges, inspires the public, and networks constituencies.

Rhode Island Humanities will integrate community-centered engagement strategies into our practices while developing clear, enticing, and relevant pathways for the public to engage with us.

Key indicators of progress:

- Creating meaningful avenues for compensated members of communities to contribute knowledge and perspectives.
- Amplifying the contributions of the humanities to addressing challenges, including for civic health.
- Collaborating with partners across the state to broaden audiences and increase access to and awareness of Rhode Island Humanities.
- Commemorating the Rhode Island Humanities' impact and inspiring commitment to the organization's future.

Goal #4: Develop an equitable and inclusive culture of giving to express and advance our goals, vision, and values.

Rhode Island Humanities will holistically assess and implement updates to the development program to inspire board members and donors, connect donors to the impact of our work, and broaden giving.

Key indicators of progress:

- Incorporating DEIA practices into our development program.
- Creating meaningful and inspiring opportunities to gather a broader donor base.
- Identifying and pursuing new revenue sources or funding partnerships to fulfill our mission and specific goals.

Evaluation and Accountability

Rhode Island Humanities will measure its progress toward the strategic plan's goals on an annual basis and establish specific priorities for the following year that advance this strategic plan. Qualitative and quantitative progress toward the key indicators for each goal will be identified, tracked, and evaluated throughout the year and included in the end-of-year report to the board. This will include evaluating progress toward achieving specific steps in the DEIA Action Plan.

Sources

[2022 Rhode Island Civic Health Index](#)

[Catalyzing the Humanities in Rhode Island, 2014-2019](#)

[Culture is Key: Strengthening Civic Health in Rhode Island Through Cultural Participation](#)

[DEIA Action Plan](#)

[Interim Strategic Plan 2020-2023](#)

[National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965](#)

[Op-ed: Relaunch our Democracy by investing in the NEH](#)



RHODE ISLAND HUMANITIES

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