

Building a More Perfect Union: Museum of African American History with the Boston Writing Project Awarded Pandemic Recovery Grant

Grant funded by the National Writing Project as part of the National Endowment for the Humanities' American Rescue Plan: Humanities Grantmaking program.

For Immediate Release

Boston, Massachusetts, April 20, 2022 — Museum of African American History (MAAH) with the Boston Writing Project (BWP) announces the awarding of a grant through the National Writing Project's Building a More Perfect Union, a grant program for humanities organizations across the United States to assist in recovering from interruptions to operations due to the coronavirus pandemic. As part of the American Rescue Plan: Humanities Grantmaking for Organizations at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Building a More Perfect Union program funds organizations to develop programming in anticipation of the upcoming 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.

The purpose of this project is for BWP to partner with MAAH to renew interest and raise public attention about MAAH and engage the community, especially the youth in the Black community, with MAAH as a site for public education. We aim to resuscitate the spirit and create new stories of today's multiethnic Black families who are actively pursuing their civic duties in and around the Greater Boston area in this post-George Floyd era. BWP and MAAH partnership takes a youth-centered, inquiry stance built upon a reparative, liberatory justice framework. We will partner to restore, nourish, uplift, and learn alongside/from BIPOC students in Boston and Cambridge. This program will support young leaders as we collaboratively work to humanize and transform the curriculum/teaching and learning, supporting writing growth around racial equity issues through understanding the past, analyzing our present, and preparing for an anti-racist, humanistic, civic-oriented future.

"We hope to give teachers and students the keys to the portal that gives us sight into what history tells us through special windows," said L'Merchie Frazier, Director of Education/Interpretation at MAAH & BWP Advisory Board Member.

The awarded projects, selected through a competitive, peer-reviewed application process, are located at local, regional, or cross-regional organizations such as nonprofits, museums, libraries and archives, historic sites, and public-facing humanities centers at colleges and universities across the country. This funding will help such entities restore programming post-pandemic and to engage or deepen collaborations with stakeholders and communities that will expand their reach.

“Each project contributes to a shared national conversation in important ways.” said Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, Executive Director of the National Writing Project. “Building a More Perfect Union recognizes the unique role that local, regional, and cross-regional humanities organizations play in understanding and making visible fuller stories of our national experience.”

Awardees plan to “build a more perfect union” through expanding access and raising the visibility of lesser known stories and histories in regions and communities, engaging communities through participatory public humanities events and opportunities, and developing institutes and curriculum with teachers and students to support K12 classrooms.

“The National Endowment for the Humanities is grateful to the National Writing Project for administering American Rescue Plan funding to help local and regional humanities organizations recover from the pandemic,” said NEH Chair Shelly C. Lowe (Navajo). “These ARP awards will allow archives, libraries, museums, historic sites, and other institutions around the country to restore and expand public programs that preserve and share the stories of the communities they serve.”

To learn more about MAAH/BWP’s Building a More Perfect Union grant please visit: <https://www.nwp.org/building-a-more-perfect-union-grant-awards>

About Museum of African American History with the Boston Writing Project:

*Founded in 1979, the **Boston Writing Project** seeks to improve the teaching and learning of writing in Massachusetts classrooms. Located at the University of Massachusetts/Boston, College of Education and Human Development whose current identity is a public research university with a dynamic culture of teaching and learning, and a special commitment to urban and global engagement. BWP has had a local, state, national and international public record of exploring and supporting teachers’ cultural identities through writing, healing during the pandemic, and teaching prosocial argument writing in the K-12 classroom. The teaching of writing is approached in a cross-disciplinary context which focuses on current research, theory, and exemplary practice. We provide a community of educators who reflect on, discuss, and participate in the act of writing as a means of expression, learning, and sharing experiences that can inform pedagogy.*

*One of the cultural sites that has been visited in the past as a multicultural site where teachers might examine the themes of race, culture, gender, language, and the immigrant experience as they connect to their own identities and those of their students is the **Museum of African***

American History (MAAH), New England's largest museum dedicated to preserving, conserving and interpreting the contributions of African Americans. In Boston and Nantucket, the Museum has preserved two historic sites and two Black Heritage Trails that tell the story of organized Black communities from the Colonial period through the 19th century.

About National Writing Project:

Through its mission, the [National Writing Project \(NWP\)](#) focuses the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of our nation's educators on sustained efforts to help youth become successful writers and learners. NWP supports a network of local Writing Project sites, located on over 170 university and college campuses, to provide high-quality professional development in schools, universities, libraries, museums, and after-school programs. Through its many successful programs and partnerships, the organization reaches 6 million Pre-K through college-age students in over 2,000 school districts annually and prepares 2,500 new teacher-leaders each year. NWP envisions a future where every person is an accomplished writer, engaged learner, and active participant in a digital, interconnected world.

About the National Endowment for the Humanities:

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at neh.gov.