PA HUMANITIES

2024

discovery project

{ REPORT }

REFRAMING A MOVEMENT

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A project of PA Humanities and Drexel University's Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design

DREXEL UNIVERSITY

PA HUMANITIES
DISCOVERY PROJECT

PA humanities

{ *Table of* CONTENTS }

{ PREFACE }

> **This work is core to who I am as a human being—I have always sought to build bridges between people and honor the diversity of human experience... I can't not do it. It is a primal drive for me."**

Our commitment to the humanities for the last decade has been driven by a belief in the transformative *power of people* to lead and make positive change. As we now face so many challenges in our own lives and communities, my faith and hope is stronger than ever in the people of Pennsylvania – in their passion for the humanities and in their commitment to give back. I see people all across the state using the humanities to power their communities, transform their world, and affirm their purpose in life.

Throughout the process of the PA Humanities Discovery Project, people shared how the humanities are core to their experience as human beings and essential to a thriving community. Their perspectives strongly affirm that the humanities are a fundamental human right. It also aligns with UNESCO's Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, which stated that the humanities, encompassing our diverse cultures and traditions, "are fundamental to address the challenges of our time." Moreover, UNESCO stated that "no development can be sustainable without a strong cultural component. Indeed, only a human-centered approach to development based on mutual respect and open dialogue among cultures can lead to lasting peace."

In 2021, we undertook this journey with Drexel University, and did it hand in hand with the people of the state, along with national and regional thought leaders and grassroots practitioners. After many years of participatory research and a commitment to "learn as we go," we threw aside old ways of doing research. Our approach included surveys with open-ended questions, supporting focus groups led by and with community members, and spending the necessary time to evaluate the thousands of stories and experiences shared with us and to reflect on our findings in multiple listening sessions before we completed this report.

> **"[O]nly a human-centered approach to development based upon mutual respect and open dialogue among cultures can lead to lasting peace."**
>
> *– UNESCO's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.*

This process allowed us to discover who the people are that drive humanities work in the state, and start the process of building new relationships and knowledge to act upon. We keep learning about "possibility models," as one of our focus group members called themselves – in small towns, in cities, in rural areas – and in places not traditionally associated with the humanities like prisons, farmers' markets, healthcare facilities, food pantries, downtown squares, and more.

I invite you to discover our learnings and join our conversation – one section of the report at a time – as we explore, map, and reimagine the humanities landscape. Dive into our approach to the research, learn about the people and their work with the humanities – how they discovered in the last few years that the humanities are more important than ever for human flourishing, and why they see an urgent need to redefine the field and our value to make meaning in our lives and ensure a future where everyone in our communities can thrive.

My deepest gratitude to everyone involved in this project – from the people who took our surveys and joined our focus groups and listening sessions, to the many advisors that gave their time to stretch our thinking, to the team at Drexel University and PA Humanities who collaborated and spent long hours discovering together our purpose and journey with this project. My thanks also goes to our donors and funders at the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, and their belief in the importance of supporting research on recovery and growth and amplifying voices from the field.

I hope you are as encouraged as I am by this unprecedented look at Pennsylvania's humanities practitioners, who described their work as both rewarding but also "tiring" and "tough." They were vulnerable, sharing their stories, achievements, and struggles. This research is not just a chance for us to listen deeply to them but also an opportunity for each of us to discover how we can support their vital work being done in all our communities and join a growing movement to reframe the humanities. Together we can make lasting change.

With hope and gratitude,

Laurie Zierer

LAURIE ZIERER
Executive Director
PA Humanities

{ INTRODUCTION }

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No person's story should go undeveloped and untold. Every life matters. I've seen how story sharing can connect people from seemingly different backgrounds around their unique and shared experiences."

In 2021 PA Humanities engaged Drexel University to co-develop an innovative research effort to uncover and describe the scope of humanities practice in Pennsylvania. Inspired by research from other humanities councils and national studies examining the state of humanities, PA Humanities sought to position its work to address a unique gap in the existing research. Where other studies have focused on humanities organizations or the general public, PA Humanities aimed to lift up the lived experiences and perspectives of humanities practitioners. Framing the research through this lens enabled us to co-create an emergent design methodology responsive to ongoing input and feedback from the practitioners themselves.

This opportunity aligned with Drexel's focus on experiential, engaged learning and community based research. In particular, it called back to a 2013 study entitled *A Fragile Ecosystem* that we undertook (with our colleague Neville Vakharia) to explore the cultural vitality of Drexel's adjacent neighborhoods: Mantua, Powelton, and West Powelton in Philadelphia. The opportunity to work with PA Humanities on a statewide exploration of practitioner experiences matched with our desire to engage in grounded, community-driven research on topics of great importance to the civic fabric of Pennsylvania and beyond. In this project we were also grateful for the opportunity to engage a Research Assistant, Allison Wright, who provided valuable insights and data visualizations throughout the research process. Jason Schupbach, Dean of the Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design, and Neville Vakharia, Associate Dean of Research and Planning, also provided important consultation and inspiration for our work.

> **"I never thought I'd work in museums or cultural institutions because nobody told me it was a real job...I wanted to be a possibility model to other people who came into the game late."**

In our work collaborating with PA Humanities we gained extensive field experience and a new awareness of the diversity, range, and scope of the humanities in Pennsylvania. We recognized that the humanities are a fundamental human right and part of our collective flourishing. In lifting up this perspective, we are inspired by the precedent set by the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The PA Discovery Project uncovers the assets of the humanities, as well as opportunities for new ways of thinking, doing and supporting them. The research uplifts the voices of humanities practitioners, especially BIPOC voices, and recognizes the value of applied humanities to the field. In this way, the project builds and expands upon prior research efforts and methods, embracing community-driven, emergent research design.

We look forward to continuing opportunities to lift up practitioner voices and to co-design a thriving future for the humanities in Pennsylvania. As a participant in our listening sessions put it, we want to be in the business of "possibility modeling" to "take all of these people who filled out the surveys and find a way to make that less a clump and more a bouquet of different flowers." Practitioner voices matter because they point to new and different models to contribute to the field as professionals. This research will empower and encourage new and renewed conversations among funders, policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders as the results of the PA Humanities Discovery Project begin to shape the statewide discourse on humanities.

We hope you find this research as empowering as we do.

JULIE GOODMAN, ANDREW ZITCER
Antoinette Westphal
College of Media Arts & Design
Drexel University

I. About the PA Humanities Discovery Project

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We use storytelling to show the impact of our work, to share the significant changes in the community, and to empower our neighbors."

The PA Humanities Discovery Project is a research effort conducted jointly by PA Humanities and Drexel University's Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design. We used a people-centered approach to map, network, and celebrate the wonderfully rich humanities landscape across the state, from the perspective of humanities practitioners.

Our goals are to:
- Understand who across the state is building community using the humanities (even if they wouldn't necessarily call it that);
- Understand how cultural and humanities practices are used by people in their professional or volunteer work;
- Build a learning community to share best practices and stories of impact to influence advocacy and fundraising.

This research is being undertaken at a critical juncture in the humanities, when their existence and value is being called into question and debate. At the same time, people are deliberating important social, civic, and technological changes affecting people and communities, and they are turning to the humanities to make meaning, connect, and thrive.

Extrapolating from this research, PA Humanities wants to frame big questions in the larger context of society's discussion of the humanities. Many of the Discovery Project participants directly or indirectly express the view that they see their work in the humanities as important, not just to them personally or professionally, but important to their local Pennsylvania communities and to American society generally.

PA Humanities embarked on the PA Humanities Discovery Project and strengthening its voice for cultural sector as part of its PA SHARP recovery and growth initiative, as they provided emergency relief to the sector, built networks, and shared resources that helped communities and organizations pivot and sustain themselves in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Major funding for the project came from PA Humanities' federal partner, the National Endowment for the Humanities, as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, as well as the National Endowment for the Arts, and individual donors.

GUIDED *by* VALUES

The PA Humanities Discovery Project, was guided by three project goals: to map, network, and celebrate the humanities landscape; to build a more inclusive and connected community for sharing, learning, and advocacy; and to tell the story of the humanities in Pennsylvania. Through surveys, focus groups, listening sessions, and an emergent strategy-driven research design, the Project Team achieved these goals. The first and third were achieved with the process that led to this report, and with its dissemination; the second goal is an ongoing project of PA Humanities that this report will further.

Over the last decade PA Humanities has challenged more traditional definitions of the humanities. Creative and artistic practices, storytelling, historical perspectives, personal interpretation, generative brainstorming, and deliberative conversations are the tools that culture and the humanities provide to people every day to make a difference and enact change in their communities. By moving beyond the traditional discipline-centered practice, PA Humanities helps communities build connections, make spaces for new voices, create empathy and a sense of belonging, support vibrant local communities, foster resiliency and healing, develop leadership skills, improve critical thinking and instill educational tools, and challenge prejudices.

The project goals were informed by PA Humanities' mission to champion a redefinition of the humanities and their core values of putting people first, innovating and growing, sharing tools, and building networks. The Project Team centered this analysis on people, not organizations – reaching those who practice the humanities in Pennsylvania. The PA Humanities Discovery Project is innovative in its methods and its iterative, participatory design. And with this report, we share the tools that helped us measure the humanities in Pennsylvania, seeking to expand the conversation about the vital force the humanities represents in our commonwealth.

INSPIRATIONS

The PA Humanities Discovery Project was inspired by two prior reports that shed light on the humanities and framed our inquiry process. The first was the groundbreaking study by Indiana Humanities called *Humanities at the Crossroads: The Indiana Case Study*, released in January 2014. *Humanities at the Crossroads* inquired about the work of organizations involved with the humanities in Indiana. It asked how many of these organizations there were, whom they served, what programming they offered, how they collaborated, and what their leaders thought about the state of the Humanities in Indiana. This robust survey also included social network analysis, which we include in the present research.

The PA Humanities Discovery Project departs from the Indiana Case Study in a number of ways. First, we decided to focus on practitioners, not organizations, in order to get a grassroots picture of the individuals and groups making the humanities thrive in Pennsylvania. Second, we formulated our survey with many more open-ended questions (guided by our advisory groups), to get respondents speaking at some length in their own words. Finally, we added in eight focus groups, to give practitioners a chance to meet in person (and virtually) and discuss and share their experiences in real time.

> **Applied humanities is a subset of the public humanities that is distinct from traditional academic disciplines, although it borrows their content and tools. The approach uses people-centered, action-oriented, and skills-building activities to disrupt power dynamics, foster equity, promote grassroots community planning, and catalyze social change through collaboration and inclusivity.**

The second inspiration for the PA Humanities Discovery Project was PA Humanities' report *Humanities in Action: A National Perspective*, released in 2022 in collaboration with PennPraxis at University of Pennsylvania's Stuart Weitzman School of Design. This report was the result of 10 years of experience in community building and philanthropy using people-centered emergent strategy. *Humanities in Action* explores the applied humanities (as distinct from the academic humanities) and how they are thriving across a number of case study organizations throughout the United States. That report identifies a set of practices that lead to social change and flourishing. It found that humanities can be a force for equitable social change, and a set of synergies between the humanities and the broader field of community development. It also discovered through on the ground interviews that the humanities, although practitioners did not usually identify with the term "humanities," were being used through storytelling to understand identity and create empathy and understanding for leadership development, transformation of place and organizations, centering people's perspectives, healing practices, and changing the narrative in community-based work. It gives a national context to the work of PA Humanities, allowing the PA Humanities Discovery Project to return to Pennsylvania for a deep dive, reflecting and amplifying the values held by PA Humanities outlined above.

The PA Humanities Discovery Project further explores the applied humanities, seeking to understand how Pennsylvania's humanities practitioners use it in their work. The applied humanities is a subset of the public humanities, and is distinct from the academic humanities, which are centered on subject-area content. In the applied humanities, content from humanities subject areas is still involved, but that content is surfaced and explored through people-centered, action-oriented skills building activity that ultimately aims to disrupt existing power dynamics, foster equity in and grassroots ownership of community planning efforts, and catalyze social change.[1] The original use of the term "applied humanities" to describe this type of public humanities work can be traced to PA Humanities' participatory research and evaluation for Chester Made.[2] In conceiving Chester Made and other community-engaged, participant-led projects, PA Humanities drew upon the Orton Family Foundation's work in the Community Heart & Soul method, "which centers community planning and civic engagement around connecting people to each other, and to the many assets of the places they live, through individual storytelling and collective narrative building," and also upon theories of emergent strategy.[3]

[1] Donofrio, Julie T., Katie Levesque, Paul Farber, A.L. McCollough, and Alli Davis. "Humanities in Action: A National Perspective." Philadelphia, PA: PA Humanities, 2022. https://pahumanities.org/national/.
[2] Korza, Pam, and Barbara Schaffer Bacon. "Chester Made: An Evaluation Report." Washington, DC: Animating Democracy, 2015, 2.
[3] Myrick, Elizabeth, Rachel Mosher-Williams, and Laurie Zierer. "Learning as We Go: How Emergent Process Supports Sustainable Community and Philanthropic Change." *The Foundation Review* 14, no. 3 (September 1, 2022), 24.

Existing literature on the humanities, arts administration, creative placemaking, and cultural policy further informed our approach to the PA Humanities Discovery Project, particularly with regards to the idea of centering humanities practitioners in the research methodology and describing the impacts and value of humanities activity. Scholarship about the humanities, creative workers, and the larger societal contexts in which they work informed our methodology and analysis.[4] Prior research about the value, benefits, and impacts of the arts also informed our analysis of data.[5] We were inspired by recent studies involving state humanities councils like Rhode Island Council for the Humanities' *Culture Is Key* in 2021 and a special issue of the Daedelus journal from Summer 2022, entitled *The Humanities in American Life*, which featured a number of salient essays exploring the state and future condition of the humanities.[6] Other research on public humanities activity that helped us frame our work includes the National Endowment for the Arts' *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, Humanities for All*, a project of the National Humanities Alliance Foundation, and the *Humanities Indicators Project* from the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.[7] In coming to understand the humanities as a fundamental human right, we were guided in our thinking by the frameworks set out in the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, as well as UNESCO's correlation "between the right to culture and development."[8]

An additional research effort that informs this work is the 2019 humanities indicators report, *The Humanities in American Life: Insights from a 2019 Survey of the Public's Attitudes & Engagement.* Through its study of public perceptions of the humanities, this research lays important groundwork in understanding what differences exist between how people view humanities practices in higher education and cultural institutions, and how they view them in their daily lives at home and in their local communities. The results identify gaps that the PA Humanities Discovery Project reinforces through its findings that humanities practitioners' use of this term varies in different contexts.

[4] Bedoya, Roberto. "Spatial Justice: Rasquachification, Race and the City." Creative Time Reports, September 15, 2014; Galligan, Ann M., and Neil O. Alper. "Characteristics of Performing Artists: A Baseline Profile of Sectoral Crossovers." Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society 28, no. 2 (Summer 1998); Jackson, Maria-Rosario. "Investing in Creativity: A Study of the Support Structure for U.S. Artists." The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society 34, no. 1 (April 2004); Markusen, Ann. "Artists Work Everywhere." Work and Occupations 40, no. 4 (November 1, 2013); National Endowment for the Arts. "How Art Works." Washington D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, September 2012; Teresa, Benjamin F., and Andrew Zitcer. "The Specter of the 'Art-Less City': Locating Artists in Philadelphia's Creative Economy." Journal of Urban Affairs, July 20, 2020.

[5] McCarthy, Kevin, Elizabeth H. Ondaatje, Laura Zakaras, and Arthur Brooks. "Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts." RAND Corporation, 2004; Hawkins, Julie. "Countering Critique: Expressing the Value of the Arts through the Artistic Rebuttal Project." The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society 45, no. 2 (2015); Lord, Clayton, ed.. *Counting New Beans: Intrinsic Impact and the Value of Art.* Theatre Bay Area, (March 1, 2012); Zitcer, Andrew, Julie Hawkins, and Neville Vakharia. "A Capabilities Approach to Arts and Culture? Theorizing Community Development in West Philadelphia." *Planning Theory & Practice 17*, no. 1 (2016).

[6] Rhode Island Humanities. "Culture Is Key," January 11, 2022. https://rihumanities.org/program/culture-is-key/; Daedalus: "The Humanities in American Life: Transforming the Relationship with the Public | American Academy of Arts and Sciences," August 18, 2022. https://www.amacad.org/daedalus/humanities-american-life-transforming-relationship-public

[7] National Endowment for the Arts. "National Endowment for the Arts Releases Latest Survey of Public Participation in the Arts," January 22, 2020. https://www.arts.gov/news/press-releases/2020/national-endowment-arts-releases-latest-survey-public-participation-arts; National Humanities Alliance. "Humanities for All." National Humanities Alliance, 2023. http://humanitiesforall.org/about; American Academy of Arts & Sciences. "The Humanities in American Life," November 2020. https://www.amacad.org/humanities-indicators

[8] "About the Culture Sector | UNESCO." Accessed June 12, 2024. https://www.unesco.org/en/culture/about.; See section V for a discussion of Sen and Nussbaum's work on capabilities.

FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

The evolving landscape presents exciting prospects for those researching humanities practice. The PA Humanities Discovery Project yielded multiple avenues for future research, a few of which are described here. The Discovery Project's research methodology also provides a model for engaging in research that lifts up the voices of practitioners by using emergent processes.

Expanded exploration of the humanities as a human right

One of the key realizations of this research is that practitioners see their work as essential to human flourishing, welfare, and happiness. Humanities is not just a "nice to have" – it is a critical component of individual and community well-being. Therefore, throughout this report, we sound the call for humanities to be treated as a human right, part of the fundamental entitlement of all people. Putting this into practice by expanding access, inclusion, and support for humanities will benefit all those who seek to find meaning and purpose in a turbulent time.

Expanded study of humanities terminology, practices, and experiences

Our research suggests that exploring a strategic reframing of the humanities that emphasizes their roots in the human experience will more accurately describe the lived experiences of practitioners and participants. They are motivated by the desire to meaningfully impact people's lives and positively affect their community. Likewise, the lived experiences of BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and youth practitioners warrant further study to amplify their voices, highlight their contributions, and expand the base of support available for applied humanities activity.

Expanded study of unpaid labor

Though our initial survey did not explicitly categorize practitioners as volunteers, our data analysis revealed that a notable portion of survey participants identified themselves as "never paid" for their contributions to the field. Subsequent survey iterations may incorporate specific data collection methods to thoroughly comprehend volunteer engagement within the broader spectrum of humanities practitioners. This is particularly important in light of the humanities pipeline concerns unearthed in our research,[9] alongside the *Humanities in American Life* study's findings that age is an important factor in humanities engagement.

Expanded social network analysis

We were unable to gather a robust dataset to map the connections among Pennsylvania's humanities practitioners and organizations in this study. However, there was great interest among practitioners in networking opportunities, and future research could explore practitioners' connections to organizations and to each other. Online software tools like SumApp and Kumu can be used to gather, display, and share interactive network information on an ongoing basis, providing additional opportunities for humanities practitioners to identify mentors, build new connections, and advance their careers. Such mapping can also help organizations and funders who support humanities practitioners, by helping to identify gaps in the larger network of practitioners and organizations across the Commonwealth.

[9] See sections IV and VI (Call to Action) for a discussion on this topic.

Expanded study of partnerships and how they have evolved post-2020

This research demonstrates recent events have supported a shift in the way that humanities practitioners and organizations engage in partnerships.[10] Further exploration of this phenomenon could involve a granular analysis of partnership growth, distinguishing between virtual engagement opportunities and in-person programming efforts. Such delineation would provide deeper insights into the dynamics of these relationships and their adaptability to evolving circumstances.

ABOUT *the* RESEARCH TEAM

PA Humanities is an independent nonprofit and official federal-state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. They are one of 56 humanities councils located in all U.S. states and jurisdictions. They champion the humanities as a means to build community, educate, inspire, and make change. Their work puts people first, creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue and learning that leads to action. They are a voice for PA's cultural sector, working to build networks, conduct field-relevant research, and share resources statewide. The project was led by Executive Director Laurie Zierer and a collaborative team that spanned programs, research, communications and advocacy, including Dawn Frisby Byers, Nick Crosson, Jennifer Danifo, Katie Jean, Karen Price, Taylor Tolton-Kain, and Jared Valdez.

Julie Goodman and Andrew Zitcer are faculty in **Drexel University's Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design**. They led the development, deployment, and interpretation of the survey and focus group instruments. They were supported by research assistant Allison Wright. Jason Schupbach, Dean of Drexel's Westphal College, helped to convene the advisory groups and served as counsel to the project. The mission of the Antoinette Westphal College is to unlock the creativity of critical thinkers, makers, and creators who connect ideas and solve real-world problems, transforming careers and lives. Drexel University is an urban research university that integrates education, scholarship, diverse partnerships, and our global community to address society's most pressing challenges through an inclusive learning environment, immersive experiential learning, external partnerships, transdisciplinary and applied research, and creative activity. Drexel prepares graduates of diverse backgrounds to become purpose-driven professionals and agents for positive change.

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[10] See section IV for a discussion on this topic.

II. Research Methodology

ADVISORY GROUPS

NATIONAL

- **Tailinh Agoyo**, Director, We Are the Seeds, Philadelphia, PA
- **Keira Amstutz**, President and CEO, Indiana Humanities
- **Savannah Barrett**, Exchange Director, Art of the Rural
- **Ben Fink**, Founding/Former Organizer, Performing Our Future Project at Roadside Theater/Appalshop, Whitesburg, KY
- **Patrice R. Green**, Vice President of Programs, Surdna Foundation, New York, NY
- **Karen Kenton**, Director, Federal/State Partnership, National Endowment for the Humanities
- **Pam Korza**, Former co-director, Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts
- **Peter Levine**, Academic Dean and Lincoln Filene Professor, Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life Tufts University
- **Jeremy Liu**, Managing Partner, Creative Development Partners, Oakland, CA
- **Elizabeth Lynn**, Projects Director, Lake Institute on Faith & Giving; Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University
- **Clifford Murphy**, Director, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
- **Michael Rohd**, Director, Co-Lab for Civic Imagination, University of Montana
- **Alison Shott**, Community Engagement Advisor, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia
- **Regina Smith**, Managing Director, Arts & Culture Program, Kresge Foundation, Detroit, MI
- **Vanessa Whang**, Principal, Vanessa Whang Consulting, Oakland, CA

PENNSYLVANIA

- **Rodney Camarce**, Teaching Artist, Graphic Recorder, and Wellness Manager, Grounds For Sculpture
- **Dr. Meagan Corrado**, DSW, LCSW, Storiez Trauma Narratives, LLC & West Chester University
- **Daniel Egusquiza**, Executive Director, Barrio Alegria
- **Julia Spicher Kasdorf**, Liberal Arts Professor of English, Pennsylvania State University
- **Spud Marshall**, Founder and Owner, My Creative Community, LLC
- **Sarah Merritt**, Director of Pennsylvania Creative Communities & the Creative Economy PA Council on the Arts
- **Michael O'Bryan**, Distinguished Resident Fellow, The Lindy Institute for Urban Innovation at Drexel University, CEO, Humanature
- **Todd Pousley**, Director of Community Development, NeighborWorks Northeastern Pennsylvania
- **Andrew Sheaf**, Deputy Director, PA Department of Community & Economic Development
- **Jennifer Turnbull**, Co-director, Finance and Programs, Spiral Q
- **Tree Zuzzio**, Executive Policy Specialist, PA Department of Community and Economic Development

The PA Humanities Discovery Project was advised by a cohort of 26 national and local Pennsylvania stakeholders. They formed the PA Working Group and National Advisory Board to bring wide-ranging experience and perspectives on the humanities from a variety of different sectors as we developed the project, interpreted findings, and reflected on themes and trends. Together, we deliberately and playfully explored the value of the humanities in people's lives, with storytelling prompts like "Share a creative or cultural experience with the humanities that blew your mind" as we explored how Pennsylvanians described the humanities during our research. Over the course of the project, the national group joined the state group three times to provide early context and direction for the research, advise on the overall scope of work as we progressed, and help us analyze findings and communicate the value of the work. The state group met more frequently and served as close advisors in the process – from providing guidance on methods, design, scope, and reach, getting directly involved in research practices and implementation like focus groups, and helping connect us to key members of communities across the state.

Early on, our advisors challenged us to rethink our survey approach, ask open-ended questions, and provide opportunities for practitioners to speak about their work in their own ways. When we had survey results, they dug into the data with us and gave input on how they would interpret the information. A smaller subset of the National Advisory Group, part of the Humanities at the Crossroads research team, advised us on social networks and explored with us how our research gatherings may be opportunities to strengthen pluralism in our society at a time when that may be at risk. When members of both groups were invited back into the process to vet a preliminary set of findings before the first drafting of the results of the Discovery Project, we asked how themes and trends surfaced in their work, and their community's practice. We asked what burning questions they had and what else should we be considering. After teams from Drexel and PA Humanities distilled and interpreted the findings through multiple drafts, we held two final listening sessions with our advisors and participants of the survey and focus groups to share back what we discovered to get everyone's reactions, thoughts and affirmations.

PARTICIPATORY EMERGENT STRATEGY

The PA Humanities Discovery Project was guided by principles of emergent strategy and a participatory research design. Emergent strategy is a term associated with the work of activist and writer adrienne marie brown in her 2017 book of the same name, and it describes emergence as a process by which, through many interactions, individual entities or "agents" create patterns that are more sophisticated than what could have been created by an individual entity. Emergence is beyond what the sum of its parts could even imagine. As a corollary to the collaborative and collective nature of emergence, no one entity (e.g., funder, grantee, or expert) could have envisioned the entire solution *a priori*.

ELEMENTS of EMERGENT STRATEGY

- Harnesses collective wisdom and creativity
- Emphasizes flexibility, trust, and incremental progress
- Ongoing dialogue and power-sharing
- De-centers the expert, embracing continual learning and real-time adjustments
- Elevates diverse voices and experiences, fostering equity and empathy

Emergent strategies are structured around a number of mutually-reinforcing qualities, including: the intentional pursuit of shared values and goals; being relational, networked, interdependent; taking the long-view; dynamic and adaptive in times of complexity and chaos; and emulating the fractal nature of reality, in order to mirror the change we want to create. In emergent strategy, trust is paramount; one of brown's key sayings is "move at the speed of trust." It emphasizes incremental progress done with care and attention to detail and process, stating, "there is always enough time for the right work"[11] Finally, emergent strategy emphasizes that there is never a failure, but a lesson to be found – and that what we pay attention to grows.

PA Humanities adopted the practices of emergent strategy in their participatory, collaborative community programs like Chester Made and PA Heart & Soul. Both projects are built on process, meaning that emerging learning and real-time discoveries are integrated into the work – even if it means changing course or building in new ideas that weren't previously considered. Key to this process is de-centering the "expert" and instead tapping into the collective expertise and experiences of the group to build the final product. This requires an ongoing, open and constant dialogue and power-sharing among the project partners and participants that lifts the conversation in the moment to explore differences, find creative synergies, create understanding and empathy as a pathway for transformation and change. Says Myrick, Mosher-Williams, and Zierer about this process:

> PA Humanities is learning how to release its hold on power, stop treating grantees as problems to be solved, and acknowledge that unquestioned assumptions are, in fact, strategic barriers. By walking alongside communities as each tells a unique story of creativity and character, the council is telling a new story about itself and moving out of silos, into relationships, and toward equity. ... Emergent strategy coupled with emergent learning provides the means for foundations to return again and again, with confidence and humility, to 'learning as we go.'[12]

[11] Brown, Adrienne M. Emergent Strategy. Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017.
[12] Myrick, Elizabeth, Rachel Mosher-Williams, and Laurie Zierer. "Learning as We Go: How Emergent Process Supports Sustainable Community and Philanthropic Change." The Foundation Review 14, no. 3 (2022). https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1619.

The Discovery Project borrowed this approach and embraced emergent strategy via a participatory research design, relying on the advisory boards for close communication about the project's design, implementation, interpretation and dissemination. At every stage, we engaged in consultation with advisors, including some feedback that reshaped the nature of our survey and focus group design to be more accessible and inclusive. The advisors were generous and thoughtful, bringing our attention back to equity and improving the instruments through their offerings. We also met with research specialists who worked on the Indiana Humanities Council's *Humanities at the Crossroads* case study, to improve our understanding of social network analysis.

In addition to relying on our advisory boards, we invited survey respondents and focus group participants to join us in final listening sessions to maximize the opportunity to learn with them. In these conversations, we found that the core findings of this report resonated with participants. In particular, participants in the listening sessions described the humanities as a connector of people, seeing humanities work as not just a job but as a personal mission and calling. They understand the importance of preserving history and culture, viewing libraries and other institutions as community hubs that can foster intergenerational connections, support mental and emotional wellbeing, and serve as cultural homes. They were inspired by the idea of the humanities as a human right, connecting to broader concepts of diversity and inclusion, access to education, and cultural representation. We also solicited photographs and stories from participants of their own humanities practices in action and their experiences developing and sustaining their work, adding a visual and narrative element to the Summary Report.

One listening session participant explained the importance of exposing students and emerging professionals to the possibility of humanities careers, something we explore in depth later in the report:

> The whole idea that museums could be a career was something that I didn't experience until much later. Even though I grew up in a city where a high percent[age] of the population are over-educated. It's a big time college town. My parents were not people who went to museums. When I worked at the Children's Museum here in Pittsburgh, we talked about all the kids who came with school groups that would never visit a museum except with a school group. And that was me. That was something that my parents were just not attuned to.

Participants in the listening sessions relished the opportunity to be in conversation and find connections. This can be hard, and sometimes lonely work. One participant felt seen: "I think working in this field is very tiring and you can just really burn out quickly. It was really encouraging to hear people's feelings about this work, not just like, 'Oh, I do have a cool job' – but literally it came off on a cellular level; someone said, 'I can't not do humanities.' And I think that was just really cool to see because this is tough and we need a lot of community, [to be] enabled to do this work."

THE SURVEY, FOCUS GROUPS, & SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

Survey Administration

The Discovery Project's first phase consisted of an electronic survey designed for humanities practitioners across Pennsylvania. The survey instrument, designed in close consultation with the advisory groups, consisted of a combination of closed- and open-ended questions divided into sections (the complete survey instrument is available in the Appendix). The sections asked respondents to:

- Describe the type of humanities work they do with their communities
- Explain where these activities occur
- Detail how long they have been doing this work, why they do it, and how their work is supported by others
- Share their experience of their work during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond
- Analyze their networks through exploring partnerships with organizations and groups
- Offer thorough demographic information to help paint a clearer picture of humanities practitioners in Pennsylvania

We offered incentives for the survey takers to increase participation. Upon completing the survey, ten participants were selected in a random drawing to receive a gift basket or $50 gift card from a local Pennsylvania food business.

Sampling and response rate

The PA Discovery Project sought responses from individual humanities and cultural practitioners across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – both those who engage in these activities professionally and those who do so without financial compensation. Respondents answered questions about their activities, and while some questions focused on organizational activities, this was not a survey of humanities and cultural organizations per se.

We launched the survey in September 2022 and closed it in January 2023. We received 1,170 responses overall. Of those responses, 541 were complete. Among the partial responses, 60 respondents completed more than 50% of the survey questions and 77 completed between 15% and 50%. Responses from all 1,170 surveys will be included in the analysis of each question, with the number of responses (n) noted included for each question.

To reach respondents, PA Humanities staff, board, and advisory committee members leveraged their networks of humanities and cultural practitioners across Pennsylvania. As part of this outreach, both PA and national organizations within these networks which had their own email contact lists, newsletters, and social media reached out to individuals in those networks, using sample emails, newsletter posts, and blog posts prepared by PA Humanities staff. Special thanks are due to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museums Commission, PA Museums, the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, Pennsylvania Council for the Arts, Americans for the Arts, the American Association for State and Local History, Citizens for the Arts in Pennsylvania, the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, all of the regional state arts partners, and many other humanities, cultural, and civic organizations across the Commonwealth that helped get the word out. To maximize accessibility, the survey was translated into Spanish and Mandarin and made available on the PA Humanities Discovery Project landing page on PA Humanities' website.

Survey Demographics

The Drexel research team and PA Humanities staff monitored weekly reports (without identifying detail on individual participants) to determine the geographic and demographic characteristics of respondents and compared those against PA's Census demographics, such as age, race/ethnicity, and gender. For example, if the percentage of total responses from rural counties in central PA, the Lancaster MSA or Scranton–Wilkes-Barre MSA was lower than that MSA's percentage of the PA population, PA Humanities staff, board, and advisory committee members would then connect with their networks of humanities and cultural practitioners in those areas to make or re-make requests to complete the survey in line with other-represented populations. Similarly, if the percentage of respondents that identified as Black or African American or as Hispanic/Latino/a/x[13] was under-represented compared with the adult population of PA, the survey network was activated to reach out to members of these communities.

There was no specific intent to ensure that the percentages of respondents in the survey matched the demographics of PA. Indeed, one question is how the study population differs from PA overall. The intent was to ensure that humanities and cultural practitioners who are members of all PA communities, including geographic, generational, and race/ethnicity, were contacted and had the opportunity to participate.

The PA Humanities Discovery Project achieved a relatively large sample size. With a sample of 541 completed surveys, compared with an adult population (ages 18+) of 10,290,047 in Pennsylvania, we estimate that the survey margin of error for 541 responses is 4.2%, with a confidence level of 98% (see Figure 1).

The sample population is, in most respects, quite similar to the PA population overall (see Figures 2 to 9). One notable difference is in the gender of respondents – the percentage of the survey respondents who are female is 67%, compared with 51% of the adult PA population. Another notable difference is in the percentage of the survey respondents who have a bachelor's degree is 89%, compared with 33% of the PA population over 25. Further, persons ages 18-24 are underrepresented, which may be related to the above issue of education - that persons involved in doing humanities work have completed undergraduate education (see Figure 5).

{ FIGURE 1 }

Distribution of Responses for the PA Humanities Discovery Project by Zip Code.

Responses per Zip Code

- 1
- 2-3
- 4-6
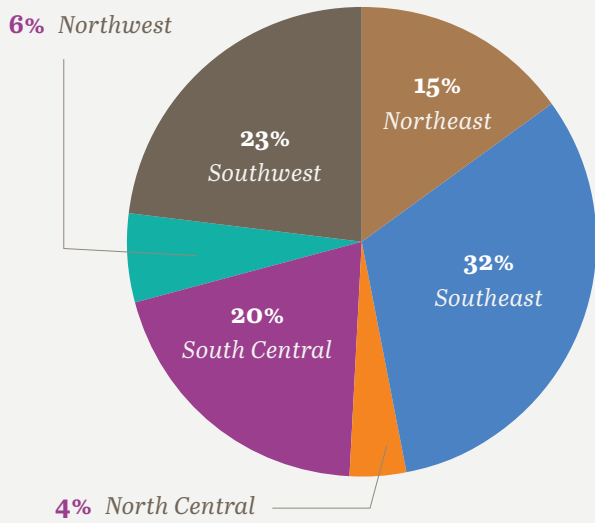- 7-11

PA Humanities Regions
County Boundaries

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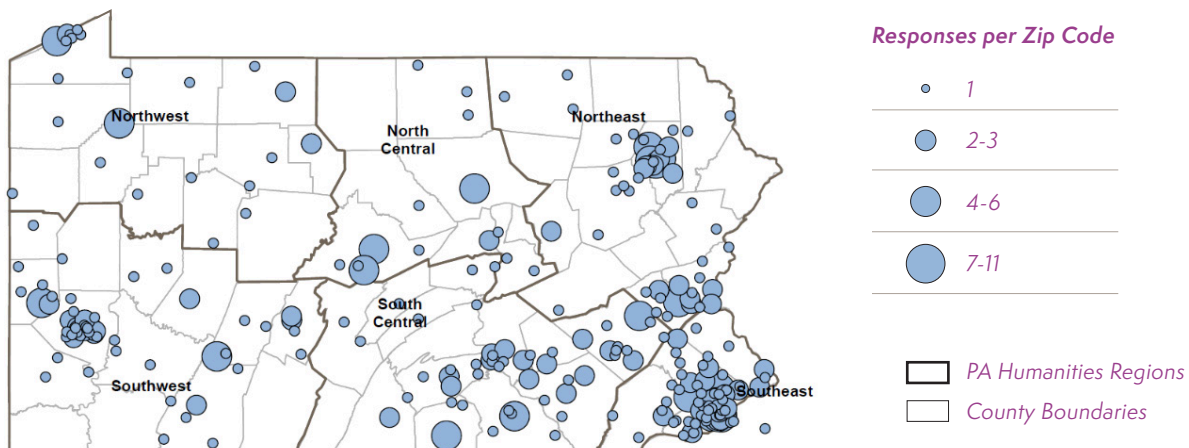
[13] The terms Black or African American and Hispanic/Latino/a/x are used here as presented in the survey. In the remaining reports, we use the terms Black and Latinx for ease of readership.

{ **FIGURE 2** }

Pennsylvania Population by Region

(US Census Data)

6% *Northwest*

23% *Southwest*

15% *Northeast*

32% *Southeast*

20% *South Central*

4% *North Central*

Data Derived from U.S. Census

{ **FIGURE 3** }

Survey Responses by Region

8% *Northwest*

19% *Southwest*

19% *Northeast*

30% *Southeast*

18% *South Central*

6% *North Central*
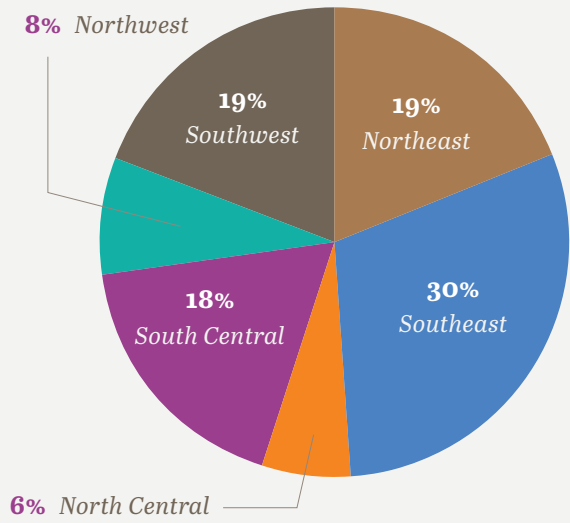
{ **FIGURE 4** }

Urban and Rural Breakdown in Survey Responses

23% *Rural*

77% *Urban*
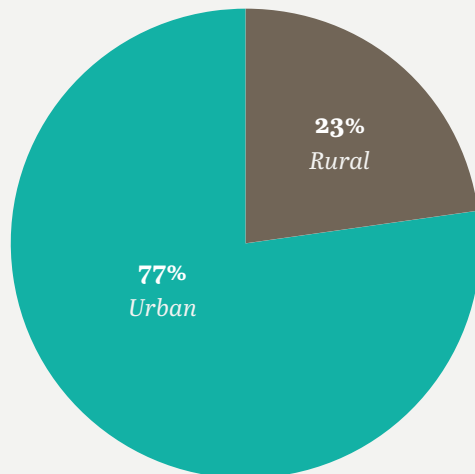
26% of the population of PA resides in counties classified as rural.

(Classification of PA counties by rural and urban by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania)

{ FIGURE 5 }

Survey Responses by Age

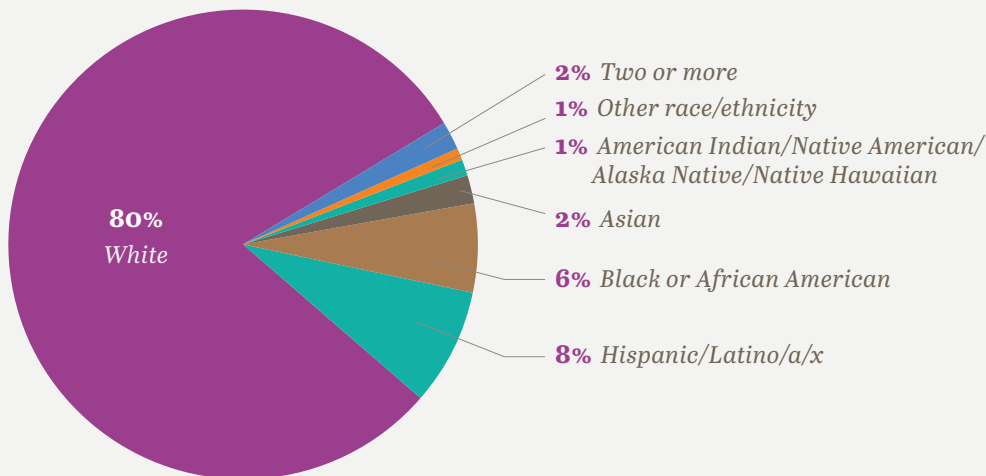| Age	Survey Respondents	PA Adult Population (18+)
18-24 years old	1%	11%
25-34 years old	17%	16%
35-44 years old	20%	16%
45-54 years old	20%	15%
55-64 years old	18%	18%
64-75 years old	19%	14%
75 or older	6%	10%

n=509

{ FIGURE 6 }

Survey Responses by Race/Ethnicity *with Hispanic/Latino/a/x as race*

- **80%** *White*
- **2%** *Two or more*
- **1%** *Other race/ethnicity*
- **1%** *American Indian/Native American/ Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian*
- **2%** *Asian*
- **6%** *Black or African American*
- **8%** *Hispanic/Latino/a/x*

n= 483

U.S. Census figures for PA Population 18+ for comparison:

White 76%; Hispanic/Latino/a/x 7%; Black or African American 10%;
Asian 4%; American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian <1%;
Other race/ethnicity <1%; 2 or more races/ethnicities 3% (derived from U.S. Census 2020 DHC P11)

"Hispanic/Latino/a/x as race" indicates a commonly-employed presentation of survey response data and the U.S. Census data. In a way that views "Hispanic/Latino/a/x" alongside data for "White," "Asian," and other responses on a 100% scale. U.S. Census reporting otherwise presents data on race with a separate reporting on the population identifying as "Hispanic/Latino/a/x," making some interpretation more complex. Reporting as we have done here can however obscure some of the complexity inherent within the data, as well as undercount the "Other race/ethnicity" category.

{ FIGURE 7}

Survey Responses by Gender

U.S. Census figures for comparison:
Female: 51%; Male 49%

n=491

30%
Man

67%
Woman

<1% *Agender*
<1% *Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming*
1% *Non-binary*
1% *Third gender*
<1% *Trans man*
<1% *Trans woman*
1% *Self-describe (write-in)*
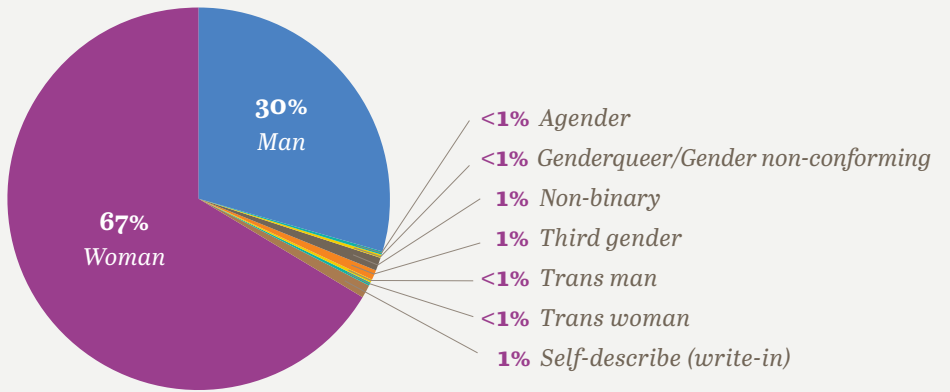
{ FIGURE 8}

Survey Responses by Sexual Orientation

No data available from U.S. Census

n=509

5% *Asexual*
5% *Bisexual*
4% *Gay or lesbian*
2% *Pansexual*
3% *Queer*
2% *Self-describe*

79%
Heterosexual or straight
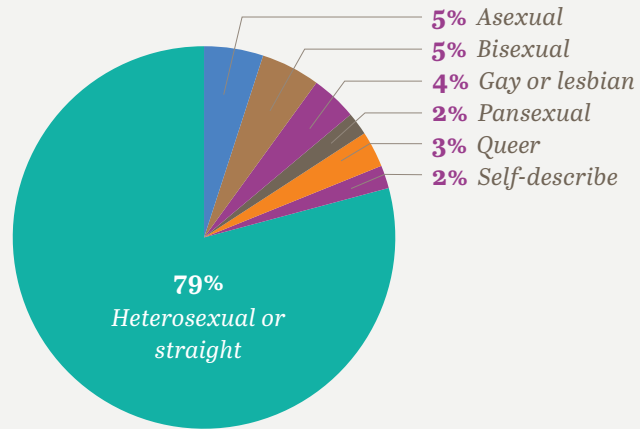
{ FIGURE 9}

Survey Responses—Persons with Disabilities

U.S. Census figures for comparison:
16% of PA Population 18+ are persons with disabilities

n=505

15% *Person with disability (ties)*

6% *Choose not to self-identify*

79%
Not a person with disability (ties)

We used a variety of demographic and geographic filters in our review of survey data. Two of these are Urban/Rural and BIPOC. Urban consisted of 19 Pennsylvania counties (Allegheny, Beaver, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Cumb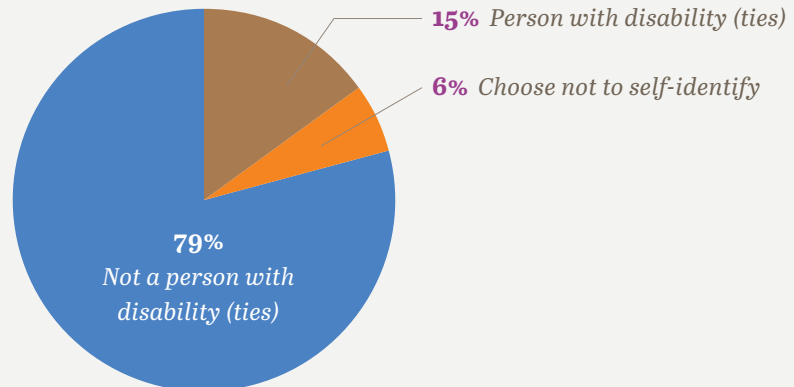erland, Dauphin, Delaware, Erie, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Luzerne, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Westmoreland, York), while rural consisted of the remaining 48 Pennsylvania counties. Both excluded respondents who selected "all" in answer to a question asking in which county(ies) their work takes place. Our filter for BIPOC included survey respondents who self-identified as non-white, as white and Latinx, or as non-white and Latinx in demographic survey questions.

Focus group administration

Following the completion of the survey period, the research team held eight focus groups across Pennsylvania between January and March of 2023. Each focus group featured 8-15 participants, and all eight were recorded and transcribed by the Drexel researchers. Focus group participants were paid $75 as an incentive for participating.

Five focus groups were virtual; three were in person. Some explored an issue statewide, others were focused on a specific geography. We stratified the sample in the focus groups by featuring different sub-populations in different focus groups. In the case of the Spanish language focus group in Reading, the young practitioner focus group, the statewide BIPOC group, and the Black cultural workers group, we recruited focus group moderators from the relevant communities who were members of the Discovery Project advisory groups or had participated in a previous focus group.

We held three focus groups in person, one in Philadelphia for Black Cultural Workers, hosted by PA Humanities, one in Pittsburgh for Pittsburgh Cultural Workers, hosted by City of Asylum, and one in Reading for Spanish Cultural Workers, hosted by Barrio Alegría. The focus group at Barrio was held in Spanish - the native language of the majority of participants.

For each group, we invited survey takers who indicated interest in being part of a live focus group and who fit the criteria for each group. PA Humanities staff then looked at program partners, grantees and practitioners in the area who might be a good fit. We also considered other identity markers (e.g. gender and age) and aimed to recruit a mixture of folks from diverse backgrounds and fields (arts, history, grass-roots organizing, etc.).

Because the Philadelphia and Reading focus groups were designed to hear perspectives from individuals with specific identities, we recruited facilitators who reflected the group make-up (Black, Spanish-speaking). The Drexel University research team conducted trainings with external facilitators, worked with them to adjust the list of discussion questions as needed and provided support during each focus group.

We held five focus groups virtually, bringing together four distinct groups of practitioners and organizations from Northeastern PA, a robust area of arts, culture and humanities activity; to understand the rural perspective, we gathered a group of practitioners and organizations from the PA Wilds area and PA's rural counties. We also wanted to hear from those who had been working in the arts, culture and humanities spaces for some time, and who represented traditional partners (libraries, museums, and historical societies). Another group focused on hearing the perspectives of young humanities practitioners or hopefuls (e.g. students) ages 18-30. And, finally, recognizing that individuals from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds practice humanities throughout the Commonwealth, we conducted a statewide focus group focusing on the experiences and perspectives of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). Four of the focus groups – statewide BIPOC humanities practitioners, Black Cultural Workers, Reading/Spanish language, and young adults – were facilitated by individuals with similar backgrounds and experiences. Special thanks are due to facilitators Rodney Camarce, Meagan Corrado, Daniel Egusquiza, and Kathyrn Frazier.

5 virtual	3 in-person
• Statewide BIPOC • Young practitioners • Northeastern PA • PA Wilds and other rural areas • Practitioners from museums, libraries, and cultural groups	• Spanish language (Reading) • Black practitioners (Philadelphia) • Immigrants/cultural workers (Pittsburgh)

The focus groups asked practitioners to explore the following topics:

- Why do you do this work?
- How do you describe this work?
- Impacts of the work/Barriers to the work
- How is your work supported?
- Effects of pandemic and other recent events (political polarization, racial reckoning)
- Social network mapping exercise (additional information below)
- Looking ahead: What would your work look like in your ideal future? How do you want to be creating, recovering, and transforming with your work in the future?

A total of 87 practitioners participated in the eight focus groups. The following is a breakdown of the demographics of the focus group participants (Figure 10).

{ FIGURE 10 }

Focus group demographic breakdown

Age*	Racial Identity*	Gender Identity*	Education*	Latino/a/x/ Hispanic?**
50% 18-44	64% White	65% Female	47% Grad or professional degree	75% No
37% 45-64	15% Black/ African American	21% Male	28% Bachelor's degree	23% Yes
4% 65-74	11% Mixed Race	4% Non-binary***	15% Some college	
7% 75+	2% Asian			

*70 participants reporting; **87 participants reporting; ***not all respondents answered all questions and some answered with more than one answer choice*

Social Network analysis

The PA Humanities Discovery Project utilized two different forms of social network analysis in the surveys and focus groups.

In the surveys, respondents were asked to identify connections to other people, groups, and organizations who they work with, who do similar work, and/or who support their work. The question was first posed as an open-ended response ("Who else do you know (people, groups, and organizations) who does this kind of work?"). A second question was then presented as a chart for respondents to complete. The chart was structured as follows:

"This question asks you to tell us about the top five people or groups you work with (including any clubs or community organizations). Please tell us the name of each person or group. Then, choose the option that best corresponds to the strength of your working relationship with them:

• Close Relationship - I am a frequent collaborator with them.
• Collegial Relationship - I know them and they know me; we share information and cross-promote each other's work.
• Emerging Relationship - I am aware of them and may want to be more closely involved. They may be aware of my work.

In the final column of the chart, respondents were also asked whether they were employed by the persons or groups identified in their responses.

The survey information from the open-ended question was reviewed for frequency. Data from the chart was reviewed as follows:
- All respondents who attempted to answer the question were initially counted (n=318).
- Respondents who did not include a "from" connection (ie, they did not contain a survey respondent name, n=54) were included in the analysis.
- Respondents with unclear "to" responses were removed, n=22.
- Duplicates and aliases were identified and resolved to ensure consistency of network connections.
- UUIDs were generated for connection points (individuals and organizations).
- Networks were graphed using the online software Kumu.

In the focus groups, participants were prompted to consider, "Who do you rely on to get your work done?" In online focus groups, which took place on Zoom, participants were asked to think of 5-7 responses (people or organizations) in response to the prompt and to then post their thoughts in the chat. This was followed by collective discussion, led by facilitator(s), of observations across the responses.

At in-person focus groups, participants were first issued 5-7 sticky notes, which they used to record their initial responses to the prompt ("Who do you rely on to get your work done?", one response per sticky note). Participants were then asked to tag each note as a close, collegial, or new relationship to them. They were given a sheet of paper with a bullseye diagram (three concentric circles labeled "close" (innermost circle), collegial (middle circle), and new/emerging (outermost circle) on which to arrange their notes, and were instructed to do so however they wished. Next, participants were asked to draw lines to show any connections they knew of existing between the people and organizations on their notes. Lastly, facilitators led participants on a "gallery walk" to view all of the resulting maps, engaging participants in discussion about their observations and insights from the exercise.

Focus groups, including the SNA exercise, were transcribed and coded by the project researchers during the review of qualitative data.

III. Where Are We?
The State of Humanities in PA

"

Right now, you know that there's such a need for connection, right? And we all know where our society is and it seems to me the humanities is the key way that we can connect."

KEY POINTS

- Humanities practitioners view their work as not just a career, but integral to their identity. They have a strong desire to give back, and they find the work empowering for themselves and for others.

- Humanities practitioners offer a high number of activities of multiple kinds. They are driven by a sense of urgency related to ideas of legacy, the potential loss of tangible and intangible history, current political discord, and generational and demographic change.

- Though they are resilient and persistent, humanities practitioners find it hard to obtain the resources needed to support their work.

- Humanities activity usually focuses on a local community's context, and is often related to one of four themes – history and preservation, social justice, health and wellness, and youth development.

- Humanities is ubiquitous. Activity occurs in every Pennsylvania county, and practitioners work in a diverse range of settings, including libraries, parks and gardens, and religious facilities.

The PA Humanities Discovery Project seeks to map, network, and celebrate the humanities landscape, to build a more inclusive and connected community for sharing, learning, and advocacy, and to tell the story of the humanities in Pennsylvania. We do this through an exploration of humanities practitioners' lived experiences. Our findings about humanities practitioners and humanities activity in Pennsylvania speak to three overarching themes that appear throughout this and the other sections of the PA Humanities Discovery Project. These themes – powering communities, transformation, and identity and purpose – illustrate the role and impact of the humanities here.

The humanities power communities by fostering social bonds and creating shared experiences that lead to collective action for positive change. Neighbors connecting neighbors to community support and services, veterans gathering to share their stories and listen to others, communities coming together to explore and celebrate different cultures and their heritage, teens learning and applying skills of self-expression and creativity to advocate for changes they wish to see in the world – these are all humanities activities. They occur in a wide range of spaces and places, from front porches to libraries to prisons and beyond. Humanities activity involves people from all walks of life, and is often not formally recognized as such, though its contributions support the growth, development, and flourishing of individuals and communities.

Individuals and communities are transformed through the humanities. Part of this is due to the large number and variety of activities that humanities practitioners offer. Humanities practitioners view their work as a vital part of fostering healthy lives and communities, and they see its impact first-hand. As one research participant observed, "[S]torytelling cannot just be entertainment, but it can help you to get your finger on the pulse of what people need... And they can break down barriers, shatter misperceptions. And we're driving forward with that work nonstop."

Rooting the PA Humanities Discovery Project in the voice of humanities practitioners enables us to learn more about how they see their work and its impact, and why they do it. We learned that humanities practice is an integral part of practitioners' identities. They are driven to do this work as change agents and social justice advocates for individuals and communities. Many are motivated by their own life experiences, seeking to extend the benefits they have received or to help others address the challenges they have faced.

This section is about the people who practice the humanities in Pennsylvania and the activities they present. Through an exploration of practitioners' experiences, we first look at the motivations, opportunities, and challenges of people who work in the humanities. The results provide a baseline understanding of Pennsylvania's humanities workers and the conditions they face. Rather than placing our focus on humanities organizations, as prior research has done, this study specifically sought to understand the experiences of individual practitioners and their work in order to be inclusive of those who may not be employed by humanities organizations as well as those who are.

In a similar way the data about humanities activities occurring in Pennsylvania offers a broad view of the humanities' impact in communities across the Commonwealth. By including activity that occurs in informal settings, such as neighborhood groups or community gardens, as well as activity occurring in more formal settings like libraries and educational organizations, the study presents a more complete picture of humanities activity. The research findings demonstrate the strong presence of applied humanities activity – the use of the humanities as a tool for personal growth, social change, and justice – in Pennsylvania communities.[14] Aligned with recent inquiry analyzing public perceptions of the humanities[15], this research sheds light on what a subset of people – humanities practitioners – say about the humanities.

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[14] See Methodology for more information on the term 'applied humanities.'
[15] American Academy of Arts & Sciences. "The Humanities in American Life." Washington, DC: American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2020. https://www.amacad.org/publication/humanities-american-life; Liu, Alan, Abigail Droge, Scott Kleinman, Lindsay Thomas, Dan C. Baciu, and Jeremy Douglass. "What Everyone Says: Public Perceptions of the Humanities in the Media." Daedalus 151, no. 3 (August 22, 2022).

WHO *are* PA'S HUMANITIES PRACTITIONERS?

"

The arts and humanities are the greatest connectors we have. I feel that I am engaged in meaningful, important, life-giving work."

In addition to illustrating the humanities activity that takes place across the Commonwealth, the PA Humanities Discovery Project sought to learn more about the people who work in the humanities. These individuals are described as "humanities practitioners" throughout this report.[16] They present, produce, and lead humanities activities. They may work in, and sometimes for, multiple settings such as community centers, houses of worship, libraries, other nonprofit organizations, prisons, and educational institutions. They may be engaged as independent contractors, part-time or full-time staff members, solo business entrepreneurs, or volunteers. This study's focus on the individuals who produce and present humanities activity allows us, for the first time, to better understand their experiences.

Survey findings show that humanities practitioners in Pennsylvania generally reflect the Commonwealth's overall adult population, with four important distinctions. More identify as female (67% of survey respondents vs. 51% of the overall PA population 18 and older), fewer identify as Black/African-American (6% vs 10%). Generally, humanities practitioners are well-educated. More than three quarters (82%) have a bachelors' degree and 55% have a graduate or professional degree. Nearly half (43%) are first-generation college graduates. Educational attainment was higher among urban respondents than rural, though both are considerably higher than the national average for graduate degree attainment.[17] Though humanities practitioners overall have high rates of educational attainment, this is not required to excel in the field.

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[16] See Methodology for a detailed description of research participants.
[17] US Census Bureau. "Census Bureau Releases New Educational Attainment Data." Press Release. February 24, 2022 https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/educational-attainment.html

Humanities practitioners view their work not just as a career, but as deeply personal and integral to their identity. Inspired by deeply-rooted motivations, their journeys take them from exploring personal passions to becoming champions of culture and history in their communities. Humanities practitioners are devoted to their work, navigating difficult circumstances and challenging systems to continue their practice. They report that the work is a responsibility and a calling, but that this comes with a downside – acceptance that their passion can be traded on for less ideal working conditions. At the same time, they are willing to make sacrifices for it. For example, though 58% report they are always or almost always paid, 22% report they are never paid.[18]

Practitioners also report that it is hard to obtain the resources needed to do their work. Forty-one percent of survey respondents say it is hard or very hard, while only 15% say it is easy or very easy. Notably, 44% of BIPOC respondents say it is hard or very hard to obtain the resources needed to do their work.[19] The difficulty in obtaining resources has a detrimental effect on practitioners, leading to excess workload and eventual burnout.

Humanities practitioners are incredibly resilient in the way they find and access the resources they need to support their work. The majority of respondents reported that they utilize traditional methods such as seeking grants through government and philanthropic organizations, donations, and memberships. They also organize fundraisers, book drives, and community events.

Aligned with the notion of the work as a calling, humanities practitioners don't see themselves doing anything else, and the work is often a lifelong pursuit for them. They have a strong desire to give back that has led them to their humanities work. For many, this desire is linked to modeling occurring in their youth through experiences with family, in religious settings, in service opportunities, and/or in their education. Humanities practitioners are motivated by enriching the lives of others, seeing communities thrive and succeed through engagement in the humanities, and their own personal passion for the work they do.

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[18] Please note that this figure could include volunteers who do not aim to be paid, as well as professionals who do.
[19] For additional information about the experiences of BIPOC humanities practitioners, please read the PA Humanities Discovery Project section IV, "How Do We Connect and Grow? A Diversifying Landscape"

Fifty-eight percent of Pennsylvania's humanities practitioners have been working in the humanities for more than a decade. Long-term practitioners express concerns about identifying and supporting the next generation of leadership, while younger practitioners express concerns about the stability, support, and resources available to pursue a career in the humanities. Humanities practitioners also expressed a disconnect between the value they hold for the work, and the way that the humanities (and employment in it) are viewed by others.

People who work in the humanities find personal value and outlets for self-expression in their work. This is important to them, and is another part of the reason they choose to do this work. Likewise, they find the work empowering, for themselves and for others. Humanities practitioners report that it is rewarding to watch the people and communities they work with grow through the process as they build capacity and take action on issues they care deeply about. Humanities practitioners are social justice advocates, addressing inequity and empowering positive change for individuals and in communities.

Humanities practitioners stay busy, offering activities quite frequently. Thirty-three percent offer daily activities, and another 23% offer weekly activities. Similarly, they are not doing just one thing. Humanities practitioners are engaged in multiple streams of activity, regardless of the settings in which they work. For example, they might be working at an organization such as a library that also functions as a craft center, or they could be operating as a solo business entrepreneur leading organized tours and producing a podcast.

Humanities practitioners report that they are learning the job by doing it, even if they have a humanities degree. They are persistent, and many say that they gained the experience needed to do the job by continuing to show up. Humanities practitioners' work most often focuses on the context of the local community, even if they work statewide or have national reach or reputation.

The networks of people, groups, and organizations that humanities practitioners work with tend to be localized as well. Few intersections between networks were found among the more than 300 individual networks of people and groups reported through the PA Humanities Discovery Project survey. In focus groups, humanities practitioners observed that they relied on both personal and professional network connections to get their work done, that even in the professional context their connections are to individual people (as opposed to organizations or groups), and that a disruption in their network can adversely affect their work.

# WHAT HUMANITIES ACTIVITY *is* HAPPENING *in* PA?

"

I love being able to be a steady and consistent support system in youth's lives especially in today's world. To have them smile and see the excitement in their faces when they want to tell me about their day makes it all worth it."

Humanities activity happens across the Commonwealth (see Figure 11), with multiple generations involved. Pennsylvania's humanities activities take place in a wide range of settings including family residences, parks and community gardens, schools, libraries, and community centers and organizations. Humanities activities sustain vital local initiatives, create educational opportunities, and build relationships.

Many people are involved in the planning and implementation of humanities programs and events. When asked who helps plan their activities, humanities practitioners offering daily and weekly activities mentioned volunteers, community members, and artists most frequently. Teachers, board members, businesses, and staff were mentioned less frequently. When asked who attends their activities, these same humanities practitioners mentioned adults most frequently, followed by children, seniors, schools, students, youth, the public, college students, and families. Humanities activity occurs in every Pennsylvania county, as demonstrated in the following map.
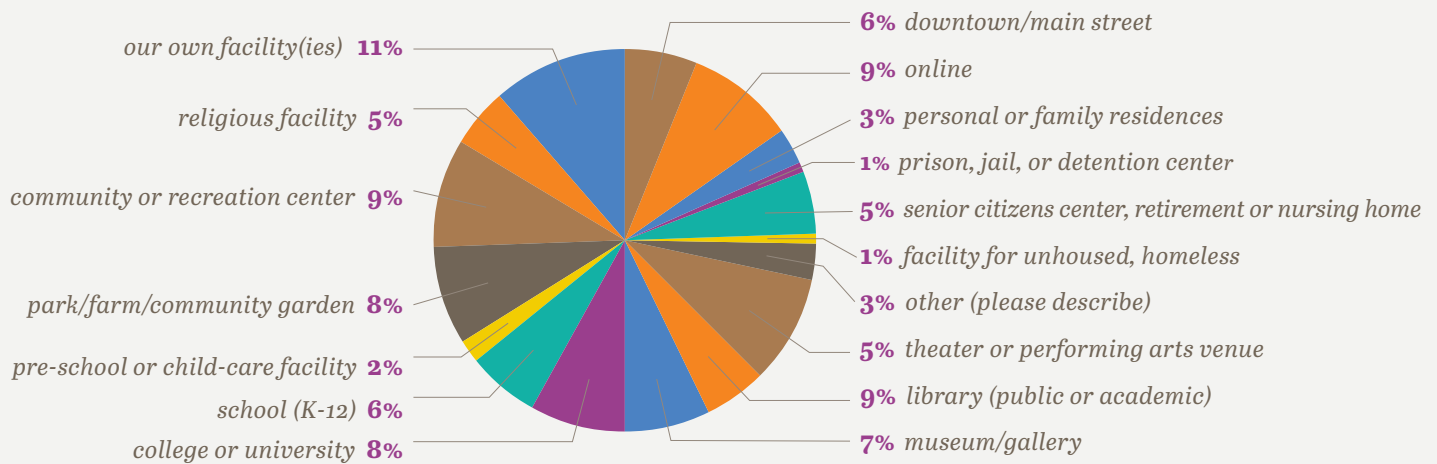
{ **FIGURE 11** }

Pennsylvania - Counties Served
The Humanities are Happening Across the Commonwealth.

Respondents Serving County

- *1-2*
- *3-5*
- *6-9*
- *10-19*
- *20-29*
- *30-60*
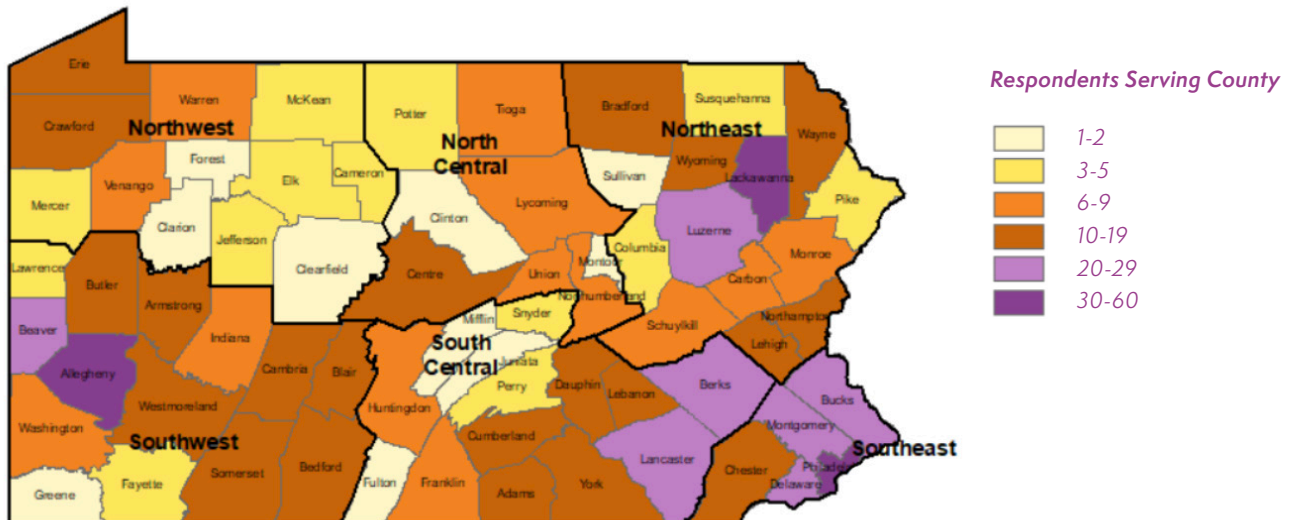
Programs and events take place in a wide range of spaces, with the most common being practitioners' (or their organizations') own facilities (11%), a community or recreation center (9%), and a library (public or academic) (9%). However, most respondents note that activities take place in more than one location. In fact, there was a tremendous variety of locations reported, as shown in Figure 12.

{ FIGURE 12 }

Humanities Programs and Events Take Place in a Wide Range of Spaces

our own facility(ies) **11%**
religious facility **5%**
community or recreation center **9%**
park/farm/community garden **8%**
pre-school or child-care facility **2%**
school (K-12) **6%**
college or university **8%**

6% downtown/main street
9% online
3% personal or family residences
1% prison, jail, or detention center
5% senior citizens center, retirement or nursing home
1% facility for unhoused, homeless
3% other (please describe)
5% theater or performing arts venue
9% library (public or academic)
7% museum/gallery

Q3.4 - In what type(s) of space or places do you conduct your work? Please choose all that apply - Selected Choice
572 Responses

Humanities activity powers communities and in Pennsylvania there is a sense of urgency to this work. This urgency is related to the humanities' real versus perceived value to communities, as seen by humanities practitioners. Practitioners feel that the humanities are valued by others for their extrinsic benefits, but that the greater worth of the humanities can be found in the intrinsic benefits the humanities offer to people and communities. The urgency of the humanities is also related to ideas of legacy (how we recognize and remember those who came before us, as well as what the current generation can provide to future generations), the potential loss of tangible historic artifacts and documented life experiences, current political discord, and generational and demographic change among people and communities. Humanities practitioners are driven to address these circumstances in the communities where they work. They aim to make the world better where they can while keeping an eye towards what will be lost if collective action does not happen now.

Humanities activity can be, and often is, described by what people are doing in any given program (research, storytelling, gardening, dancing, photography, etc.) This study aimed to discover not just what activity is happening and where it is occurring, but also its larger meaning, impact, and intent. The findings show that in Pennsylvania most humanities activity, regardless of what kind of activity it is or where it occurs, is engaged with broader themes of impact.

THEMES *of* HUMANITIES ACTIVITY *in* PA

The four most common themes of humanities activity found in the PA Humanities Discovery Project are about history and preservation, social justice, health and wellness, and youth development. Humanities practitioners across the Commonwealth are engaged in work that meets the challenges of our times.[20] The four most common themes of their work are all about how the humanities are being deployed for societal and narrative change, as well as health and educational outcomes. Other, less frequently occurring themes of humanities activity in Pennsylvania include personal development (life skills), community revitalization, and civic education. Many humanities activities in Pennsylvania explore or address multiple themes. The four most common themes are further described below.[21]

History and Preservation

There is a changing engagement with history and preservation in Pennsylvania's humanities activity, aiming for greater inclusivity in evolving communities. One humanities practitioner described it this way: "I see preservation in itself as a mechanism of social justice, albeit somewhat indirect. By selecting the items and the histories we are going to preserve, we are responsible for determining what future generations will be able to learn about and from. Selection and ensuring preservation of as broad a range of materials as possible will only strengthen the historical record."

The value of many forms of history, including local, shared, ethnic, and industrial or economic histories, was raised consistently by PA Humanities Discovery Project participants. History leads to new discoveries, recognizing previously ignored and untold stories. History and preservation connect to social justice and environmental justice, as well. The choices made about what stories are told and what artifacts are saved determine what we, and future generations, can learn from our past. Documenting land practices and their resulting impacts on people, communities, and the Earth itself informs current discussions of land use.

[20] Liu, Alan, Abigail Droge, Scott Kleinman, Lindsay Thomas, Dan C. Baciu, and Jeremy Douglass. "What Everyone Says: Public Perceptions of the Humanities in the Media." *Daedalus* 151, no. 3 (August 22, 2022): 19–39; Pawelski, James O. "The Positive Humanities: A Focus on Human Flourishing." Daedalus 151, no. 3 (August 22, 2022): 206–21.

[21] See section VI for a discussion of how these themes apply to future directions for the humanities and a call to action.

One research participant observed that their work provides "an immersive and unique context for learning about the intersection of history, art, and social justice, as well as the story of Pittsburgh and its place in history. We use the themes of love, justice, and empathy to sustain our commitment towards a more empathetic and just society." In our listening sessions, academic practitioners remarked how our finding that history and preservation are common themes in applied humanities ought to be communicated to the university humanities community, which is struggling to demonstrate its relevance and value to the public. It's the "zeitgeist" of this moment and "that people are thinking about this as one area that is crucial for the humanities."

Social Justice

Social justice is important to humanities practitioners, who engage in activism around identity to purposely drive societal change that leads to increased equity. The humanities enable transformation. They are dynamic tools for social justice, wellness, and community change. One practitioner observed that "Our community is in a period of great change, and I want to make sure the change we see is equitable for everyone." Humanities activity plays a pivotal role in reshaping communities, addressing social issues, and fostering wellness. Spaces where humanities activity occurs, such as libraries, often serve as welcoming and inclusive havens for under-served, under-represented, and systemically harmed community members. They provide safe spaces for people to come together and explore new narratives and under-represented voices. "I feel compelled to help others and be part of the solution instead of the problem," said another practitioner. "I want to make the world a better place where everyone has adequate needs such as food, housing, safety, health care and education." In the current moment of political polarization, libraries, museums, and other spaces of humanities activity are engaged in important work to create community dialogue and to share the otherwise untold stories and lived experiences of their communities. One participant in the listening sessions tied the possibility of overcoming polarization with the opportunity to increase social connection (which we discuss further in the next section), stating, "Right now, you know that there's such a need for connection, right? And we all know where our society is and it seems to me the humanities is the key way that we can connect."

Health and Wellness

Health and wellness is both a theme and an outcome of humanities activity in Pennsylvania. Humanities practitioners address both physical and mental health in their programming. Many programs are place-based, and aim to heal hurt people by providing safe spaces and activities through which trauma and other stressors can be addressed. One example of this is found in a library that adapted its facilities based on the human services needs of its community:

> We work with libraries in Harrisburg, and they recently had someone come in and do a survey, and literally 100% of the people who were at the library at the time that they did the survey identified as homeless. It's a huge, enormous issue. I know that there's a security grant that they're looking at right now to help with that, and they've been really proactive, in that they actually created kind of semi-private rooms during a recent renovation so that human services could be there and actually have human services there on site. So there's a lot of partnership going on there. But you are absolutely right. It is, they have become second responders basically to the human services, at least in that area.

Reflecting on our findings, one listening session participant wondered about how this kind of work may support our mental health as human beings and how the humanities can "be applied to help address some of the issues that are happening that people are seeking answers for across the globe."

Youth Development

Humanities activity provides safe spaces and activities for youth across the Commonwealth. Youth development has lifelong, intergenerational benefits. It promotes both self-understanding and understanding of others across the globe, developing people's capacity for empathy and humanity. Humanities practitioners in Pennsylvania invest in the future by nurturing, educating, inspiring, and empowering youth, who are the next generation of citizenship and leadership in Pennsylvania's communities. One practitioner stated that "Youth development is at the forefront of our vision. By providing hands-on exhibits, early education classes, summer camp programming, cultural experiences, and educational events, we are able to teach lifelong learning habits that support and enhance the success of many generations."

> **I love being able to be a steady and consistent support system in youth's lives especially in today's world. To have them smile and see the excitement in their faces when they want to tell me about their day makes it all worth it."**

Having a meaningful presence in people's lives is an important motivation for many humanities practitioners. One said, "I love being able to be a steady and consistent support system in youth's lives especially in today's world. To have them smile and see the excitement in their faces when they want to tell me about their day makes it all worth it. I just simply love being able to help in any way I can for these families."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What is your "why" for doing the humanities work you do? How does it show up in the work you do with community members/your audience?
2. How did you gain experience to do humanities work? What kinds of career guidance, mentorship, and support systems are needed for this practice?
3. How does the community and your culture shape or impact the work you do? In what ways do these findings suggest other ways to engage the community in creating humanities experiences with you?
4. Where do you practice your work? In what ways do these findings suggest other places and spaces to engage in the humanities?
5. What are the variety of resources you tap into to do your work, explore your culture, and thrive in your community?

IV. How Do We Connect and Grow? A Diversifying Landscape

KEY POINTS

- Humanities practitioners shifted to virtual programming during the pandemic. Though they faced challenges reaching people who lacked internet and broadband access, this shift changed the way practitioners work, bringing with it opportunities such as expanded audiences and a focus on accessible technology.

- Rather than relying on existing program models, humanities practitioners reimagined their work to better meet the needs of the people and communities they serve in new ways. This let community needs set the agenda and change the way practitioners and organizations engage in partnerships.

- The last three years heightened practitioners' awareness of the value and impact of social connection fostered by humanities activity. Many practitioners observed an increased need for social connection among the people they serve. More recently there has been a gradual return to in-person humanities activity, though practitioners and organizations have not yet achieved the stability of pre-pandemic operations. They are still seeking certainty in 'the new normal.'

- Through surveys and focus groups, BIPOC humanities practitioners again and again shared how they encountered career path challenges including a lack of entry points and professional development opportunities. These experiences provide an opportunity to better recognize and support multiple pathways to leadership beyond degrees in the field. In this report, we identify the idea of a "possibility model," a practitioner who inspires other, under-represented voices to join the field by the example of their experience.

- Additionally, a widespread lack of volunteers and an underdeveloped career pipeline among all humanities practitioners suggest opportunities to identify and develop the next generation of humanities support and leadership.

This section is about practitioners' more recent experiences, from 2020-2023. We sought to understand the challenges and opportunities presented by both the pandemic and renewed calls for racial justice and racial reckoning, and to explore findings that emerged in our survey results about opportunities to further support BIPOC practitioners and the next generation of humanities workers. We conducted additional focus groups statewide and in Pittsburgh, Reading, and Philadelphia to engage with the fullness of their lived experience. These were led by the Drexel team and BIPOC advisors. Additionally the report lifts findings that emerged in surveys and focus groups about the next generation of humanities support and leadership, aiming to learn how to grow the ecosystem of humanities practice. We take an asset-based approach to our inquiry to uphold and value the manifold contributions of humanities practitioners across Pennsylvania.

"

We believe our relevance has increased. The work has changed, in that we are doing more of it outside our walls and through online platforms, resources or outreach efforts."

An asset-based humanities perspective puts the focus on learning from and amplifying the talents and contributions of practitioners in the field. The PA Humanities Discovery Project research reinforces this again and again because we paused and reflected with practitioners at each stage of the research and interpretation of findings. Applied humanities affords the opportunity to engage people in the community in developing programming (as co-creators and practitioners), expand audiences and engagement in different formats and with different partners, to create spaces of belonging to honor and center more voices, to address history. It allows us to redress systemic injustice and the erasure of stories, to change the narrative and create inclusive spaces and diverse stories/perspectives of the past.

The years 2020-2021 will be remembered as pivotal ones for many reasons. Social justice movements, including Black Lives Matter, came to a critical focal point with the murder of George Floyd, while the COVID-19 pandemic caused quarantine closures and radical shifts in people's health, living situations, and routine activities. Political divisiveness in the United States erupted on the Capitol steps with an insurrection over election results on January 6th, 2021.In the humanities, there were competing pressures to quickly adapt programming, and to help serve and connect people and communities in a time of intense fear and isolation. Humanities practitioners have demonstrated resilience and ingenuity in this period, capitalizing on widespread attention to community health and social justice to further the work they were already doing. They used this moment in time to amplify and address individual and community needs through humanities activity. Humanities practitioners play a pivotal role in shaping a more equitable and just society by integrating principles of social justice and community healing into their professional pursuits.

THE IMPACTS *of the* LAST FEW YEARS (2020-2023) *on* PA HUMANITIES PRACTITIONERS *and* HUMANITIES ACTIVITY

In 2020, many humanities practitioners quickly adapted to the shock of COVID-19 quarantine closures by moving their programs and activities online or to a hybrid format to keep serving the public. In analyzing rural vs. urban space usage, we found that online usage was slightly higher in urban programming. The shift online presented both immediate and longer-term challenges and opportunities. Humanities practitioners cited virtual programming as a continuing opportunity to expand their audiences. One said, "We began offering more online programs almost immediately, and a number of them have continued now that things have opened up. This has led to greater accessibility for people, and a wider and more diverse audience for my organization."

The shift to virtual programming profoundly impacted humanities activity. One practitioner noted, "We believe our relevance has increased. The work has changed, in that we are doing more of it outside our walls and through online platforms, resources or outreach efforts." Another observed, "Well, we had to do programming online and smaller in-person events. But the intimacy of these programs offer a richness that we value. We also felt a greater importance to find connections with people around issues that they were grappling with in their own life, community, and cities."

Yet another observed that, "We have seen greater engagement in online programming, and have expanded our reach to community members who no longer live in our area. We have also seen the need for in-person programming to resume, but at a slower pace than we had hoped."

Going online was not an easy answer for all humanities practitioners and programs. A lack of internet and broadband access in parts of Pennsylvania complicated the shift to virtual programming. One practitioner recalled:

> At first it was a really big struggle to migrate everything to online platforms, especially because most of our constituents don't have access to the internet or computers so that really became a priority for us, for connecting people with free resources or libraries that would help them with that. And even now we have monthly tech support programs to help folks out and learn new programs, which we wouldn't have done without the pandemic.

The pandemic created a dependence on online activity that has had a lasting impact on how humanities practitioners conduct their work. One said, "Since the pandemic I have absorbed the online medium into daily activities and find that working online is now completely blended with working in person. I don't really notice switching between them anymore. On any given day I am using both."

Some successful changes in activity and program delivery that occurred are being carried forward by humanities practitioners. These include having more ebooks and audiobooks available for library lending, more services offered virtually and through social media, and an increased attention to and availability of accessible materials and tools to support greater inclusivity.

Humanities practitioners who work with older populations observed particular challenges related to aging and health safety that were exacerbated by the pandemic. In addition to the people they serve, some practitioners noted a loss of supporters during the pandemic due to the virus. One said, "We are still trying to recover from the toll the pandemic took on the library. We lost a number of loyal patrons and supporters to the virus."

Challenges of the pandemic were amplified by the financial stress it caused for humanities practitioners and organizations. For many, the need for increased programming, which continues today, has not been met by similar increases in operating support. Though public emergency relief funding was obtainable for some individuals and organizations, it neither fully addressed the need, nor is it available as longer-term support. During the height of the pandemic some practitioners were furloughed or laid off, while others struggled to do more with less. Philanthropic support, while vital to sustaining practitioners and organizations, also did not fully address needs in this period. Of course, support does not just come in the form of funds. Humanities practitioners depend on the people, resources and social capital (talent, skills, relationships) that they have. Trying out new formats, new audiences and more requires different resources and ways of operating.

People who work in the humanities experience the compound effects of a lack of financial capital to support both individuals and organizations. As one said, "We consider artists to be critical cultural producers in their communities and we focus on the importance of equality and inclusion, fair wage for work produced, and the health & wellness aspects of being able to have a sustainable and productive artistic practice."

The financial challenges of the past three years created a cyclical effect for humanities practitioners. One noted:

> For us during the pandemic, some departments were hit worse than others. Some of us who were spread really thin are the people who, during the pandemic, we're trying to do the programming. We were one of many institutions where we had talked about going virtual. We hadn't ever really done it. All of a sudden the pandemic hit, and it was, 'Hey, we're virtual,' but, for example, a lot of our education staff was furloughed. So people who maybe weren't necessarily trained in programming were doing some of that. And so that was also an impact….you were specifically in the headlights because you ended up being the person who inherited that project, but I think people were spread really thin at the exact same moment that everything was really polarized. And I think we're still, honestly, we're still trying to work our way back through that.

The more recent return to in-person activity has not fully resolved this problem. While the shift to virtual activity rapidly opened new doors and changed the way practitioners work going forward, the return to in-person activity has been more gradual, and practitioners and organizations continue to seek certainty and stability in 'the new normal.' As one observed:

> I mean, admittedly, at least in our county libraries have taken a really big hit. Our circulation and everything has not bounced back to what it was before the pandemic, which hurts, because it means that we're reaching our community less, but also that it impacts our funding, which becomes a cyclical problem. So, in that sense the pandemic was definitely a challenge. But it did also, like everyone is saying, provide a lot of outlets for good.

According to the 2023-2024 PA CultureCheck statewide research report, only 36% of cultural organizations in PA had seen their attendance return to pre-pandemic levels. While this is an increase over 2022 (when only 11% had seen a full return), 23% of organizations were not expecting attendance to fully recover until 2024 or later, and another 25% of organizations do not know or are unsure of whether attendance will recover. Additionally, the pandemic has also had a lingering effect on volunteers at cultural organizations, with 46% of organizations reporting that there were fewer volunteers in their volunteer workforces.[22]

Social Connection and Humanities Activity

Pennsylvania's humanities practitioners noted the critical importance of their work both during the pandemic and in a time of increasing political polarization. They emphasized the ongoing importance of social connection in humanities activity, and its heightened relevance since 2020. One humanities practitioner observed:

> My work has not changed, but I think its relevance has evolved over the last three years, primarily due to significant shifts in the political landscape and the impact of the pandemic. Given these shifting circumstances, a growing number of organizations are expressing keen interest in adopting art and social justice or social change strategies. They seek artists capable of delivering quality experiences within this framework.

Over the past three years, humanities practitioners observed that there was a strong need for people to come back together, and that their participants craved in-person connections. One emphasized, "I strongly believe that people, now more than ever, need to establish connections with each other and their communities. The period of COVID-19 and exacerbated political divisions has physically separated us, making these connections imperative. I believe people can find common ground through a shared commitment to ecological care."

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[22] PA Humanities and Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance. "PA CultureCheck: Statewide Report." Philadelphia, PA, 2023. https://pahumanities.org/culturecheck.

Two of the four themes found most often in Pennsylvania's humanities activity are social justice and health and wellness. The two are often linked as humanities practitioners seek to promote well-being by addressing traumas caused by inequity and other social concerns. Humanities activity in this area includes support for mental health, physical health, and addiction recovery. Humanities practitioners recognize that individual well-being is related to community well-being. As one listening session reflected after hearing these findings: "I think this work is healing. I think when people tell those stories in community it offers a shared understanding that I too am affected or I too belong."

Multiple practitioners spoke to the potential of the humanities to save lives. One said, "I believe art saves lives. Youth development is our primary focus, promoting health and wellness by incorporating social emotional learning with arts instruction. Similar programs are offered for veterans and adults in recovery from addiction. By providing a welcoming and inclusive location for education and entertainment, we hope to grow and revitalize our creative community."

Humanities practitioners' work spans from youth to older veterans in their activities focusing on social justice and health and wellness. One observed that, "The thing about being a local school leader is that your work touches so many different areas of our students' lives. We care for their physical and mental well being....We guide these students as they grow into productive members of the community. We help them understand the world around them and find a path into their future."

> **I strongly believe that people, now more than ever, need to establish connections with each other and their communities."**

Likewise, a humanities practitioner working with veterans observed that, "Our focus is on health and wellness delivered in an environment of creativity and camaraderie. Our gathering to play music keeps our participants from falling into the issues that plague Veterans such as isolation or anti social behavior, lack of purpose or mission, depression or suicidal tendencies, etc... and when a Veteran heals, their family heals, the Veteran community heals."

Humanities practitioners spoke of caring for both individuals and communities. Though this was an existing motivation for their work before 2020, they noted a heightened need for care over the past three years. One practitioner described this by saying, "My goal is to help others feel that they matter, no matter what street they live on, what ZIP code they live in, no matter what income they have, that they have some type of skill set that is a value. I think that helps with mental health."

Another practitioner, speaking to the link between healthy people and healthy communities, noted, "Our goal is to make [our community] a healthy place. We not only want it to be economically successful, but we want to make it easy for people to have fulfilling lives in our town. We strive to make it a walkable community, where people can gather close to nature; and people feel connected and supported by each other."

In addition to the focus on care, a social justice aspect of humanities activity can be found in practitioners' attention to accessibility. One humanities practitioner said:

> Some themes have risen in importance, and as a museum, we are working more consciously toward DEAI initiatives. I think the relevance we had pre-pandemic remains, but with added emphasis on some themes that weren't as prioritized before. Likewise the way we deliver content has changed, with more digital and flexible models, and still seeking the best ways to reach people now.

Another practitioner observed that:

> The last three years taught us the many ways that connection can happen. Like many, we moved to virtual programming, but we also made phone calls and met in parking lots. We began thinking more about accessibility in broader terms and looked for alternative ways to lift up voices when we could not share work through performance: we folded paper cranes, we created a magazine of poetry, and we created works for video.

Accessibility and inclusion remain key features of humanities activity post-pandemic. Speaking to this, one practitioner said:

> The pandemic has pushed the organization to go virtual/online, keep those offerings to reach vulnerable communities. Also, the question continues to be at the forefront of how the organization 'returns to normal' while prioritizing the needs of vulnerable communities who have increased engagement with the organization even though they might not be the majority served. How does the organization continue to balance and negotiate priorities while remaining accessible? Arts and humanities will always be a need but now it's about how the organization centers its work around equitable access.

Another noted that, "We began offering more online programs almost immediately, and a number of them have continued now that things have opened up. This has led to greater accessibility for people, and a wider and more diverse audience for my organization."

The term 'accessibility' is prevalent throughout Discovery Project data, and many are expanding the availability of access-oriented tools like assisted listening devices in their humanities activities. Practitioners expressed a strong need for increased support of inclusive practices, emphasizing needs in terms of being cost-free or affordable and reducing the barriers of visits to humanities spaces. One practitioner articulated that, "We still record a majority of our lectures, and I perceive this as an accessibility measure. It's important to acknowledge that not everyone possesses the ability to drive at night or depart from their residences. Thus, our consideration revolves around enhancing accessibility, ensuring inclusivity for all."

As they continue to pursue social justice through their work, an important consideration for practitioners remains at the forefront – envisioning a path to sustainability while addressing the recognized and increased needs of those they serve. As of mid-2023, the median cultural organization in PA was still seeing about 20% fewer patrons in their audiences and galleries since prior to the pandemic, which has affected organizations' bottom line. A current opportunity in the humanities lies in expanding resources to support the ongoing work of humanities practitioners, organizations, and those they serve in the pursuit of social justice.

Searching for Spaces of Belonging

The dual circumstances of quarantine closures and heightened public attention to social injustice in 2020 led humanities practitioners to think deeply about identity, role, power dynamics, and privilege within their work. One practitioner spoke to this reflection, saying:

> Why am I doing what I'm doing? The pause that happened necessitated the asking of that question, and then, I would say, a kind of larger question has been, 'Is what we're doing sustainable? Is what we're doing something that should continue?… How much have [our practices] added to structures of inequality throughout not only the Academy, but the arts and the humanities in particular?' And so, in that sense, I would say that was partially about the pandemic and thinking about structures of care but also following the murder of George Floyd and thinking about what are the voices that are brought into the room? How are they taken care of?

Spaces of belonging are critical for humanities and all forms of cultural practice. They allow for atmospheres of connection, of shared critical inquiry, and trust-building. When these are compromised, audiences can be stuck feeling the opposite: a sense of disbelonging that forces them to question their presence in certain spaces.[23] For practitioners, just like audiences, belonging and identity shape experience. In our survey, we catalog an array of diverse practitioner identities: 15% identified as persons with disabilities; 8% identified as veterans or currently serving in the US Armed Forces. In terms of sexual orientation, 21% of respondents identified as LGBTQIA+, with significant variation by age (more younger respondents identified as LGBTQIA+); 3% of respondents identified as transgender or non-binary. And 20% of practitioners surveyed identified as non-white.One participant in the listening sessions, after seeing these findings, specifically called out the need to elevate LGBTQIA+ voices and perspectives as unique and vital. She said, "If you want to draw in and make people feel safe, you have to find a way within a community to highlight individual differences. Take all of these people who filled out the surveys and find a way to make that less a clump and more a bouquet of different flowers. That would be useful. You know, it's not just a dozen roses."

As we noted earlier, the sample population from the survey is quite similar to the overall Pennsylvania population demographic breakdown. However, we recognize that there is significant variation in diversity in different regions of the Commonwealth, and the experiences of practitioners vary widely based on their local context. For example, an LGBTQIA+ practitioner in a rural area will face different opportunities and challenges than their counterpart in a larger city context. We recognize that there is no one experience that encompasses the diversity of context for humanities practitioners.

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[23] Bedoya, Roberto. "Placemaking and the Politics of Belonging and Dis-Belonging." GIA Reader 24, no. 1 (Winter 2013). http://www.giarts.org/article/placemaking-and-politics-belonging-and-dis-belonging; Jackson, Maria Rosario. "Building Community: Making Space for Art." Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute, October 2011. http://www.lincnet.net/1888.

In our research, space neutrality emerged as a concern in the context of political polarization. Humanities practitioners questioned whether their institutions truly embody neutral spaces. They underlined the challenge of maintaining neutrality in institutional spaces amidst external political pressures. One practitioner noted that, "A neutral space within our institution is deliberately structured to operate outside the realm of prevailing cultural conflicts. Our constituencies are drawn to us precisely because of this positioning."

Another practitioner observed an evolving understanding of place, space, and inequitable representation in prior humanities efforts, noting that, "I think the historic preservation movement really took a hit during Black Lives Matter. ...We were criticized for decisions that were made a long time ago, when Preservation was new, about only saving dead white President's homes, and I think they were all justifiable criticisms."

Practitioners noted tensions regarding the maintenance of a nominal 'neutral' stance in creating spaces for civic dialogue. One practitioner observed that, "I found myself in a position of having to talk as an authority on democracy, which I found was very, very panic-stricken during that time. I was very concerned about how the public would receive what I was saying. I tried to speak in an unbiased, bi-partisan manner, but I found that even with that, people on either side of the aisle could take umbrage with what I was saying. I was also tasked with content that was not necessarily content I wrote myself. It was content that I had to adapt and enhance. It was content that was written pre-2016. So it has not aged very well for what we had experienced as a nation. And it really lit a fire in me about how I could take the work that I'm doing and try to apply it. Not just to educate my own cultural community, but to educate Americans who I'm finding don't just have gaps in their knowledge of American history, but have gaps in how they understand American civics to work."

Alongside this tension, humanities practitioners voiced their experiences of external political pressure to censor materials, highlighting increased attempts to censor content during events such as Pride Month. They grapple with a complex balancing act – how to acknowledge diverse perspectives while providing inclusivity and safety. This can intersect with political polarization, as one humanities practitioner observed:

> I think political polarization in particular is a very big issue we face a lot....It's surprising because we feel like in the humanities we have this sense of free access to information and all perspectives should be represented. But we have had very specific instances of challenges, because we allow people to challenge our materials, and we had a rogue religious publication that condemned all of the local libraries that had LGBTQ materials, and I got phone calls about how I was grooming teenagers and it's one of those really hard situations to deal with when you just want to provide free access to materials that represent people, no matter who they are, and that provide ways for all of our patrons to see themselves and their beliefs, and what they want to see and learn and grow from in the library, and I think it's always been a challenge. But we stick very much to our mission statements and our values, which are about free and open access and providing all perspectives, and that helps us to face these external events that challenge us.

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>
> **We have had very specific instances of challenges [to] LGBTQ materials ... and it's one of those really hard situations to deal with when you just want to provide free access to materials that represent people, no matter who they are..."**

In the evolving political landscape, humanities practitioners acknowledged that self-censorship significantly influenced the selection of programmatic materials within the places they work. In surveys and focus groups, practitioners cited specific instances where political considerations influenced permissions and programs involving sensitive historical subjects. They stressed the need to integrate conversations of civic education and dialogue within their programming. Practitioners recognize the difficulties of navigating challenges tied to partisanship while striving to maintain respect for diverse community viewpoints. This is especially relevant in Pennsylvania, a crucial swing state that has been a flashpoint that represents the political challenges faced by the broader United States.

This challenge arises from within humanities organizations where practitioners work, as well. One humanities practitioner said:

> I don't know if you've been having this conversation in museums and galleries, but the public library is not neutral. And there are a lot of professionals who are very passionate about being on what hopefully will be considered the right side of history, and making sure that our spaces stay open and free and literate. We have been having a lot of struggle behind the scenes about how to reposition ourselves as information centers and places for learning for 'marginalized' groups – I use that word in quotations – so that it's not just cis, white experiences. And that's collections-based, that's preservation-based, that's acquisitions. And not just the programs that we've put forth to the public. It's also changing how we, as the information professionals, handle the information.

While grappling with these tensions themselves, humanities practitioners observed them among their participants, as well. One practitioner reflected seeing, "...issues of trying to educate so that we can be civil because that's what I have found – in the permission to share whatever is on our mind or whatever we feel, we've lost that decorum, that respect for one another, and that has been something I never in this role anticipated would be a position I would be put in."

The unresolved tensions that humanities practitioners are experiencing at the intersections of safety and neutrality relate to concerns of care and social justice, as well. In addition to care for those they serve, humanities practitioners themselves also need care and support. Safe outlets to express and work through their experiences with censorship and other related challenges can support continued dialogue and future action within the community of humanities practitioners and organizations.

Connection to Community

Humanities, cultural, and arts practitioners are connected to other core institutions in their communities. They rely on partnerships in order to execute the work they do. In this section, we talk about the ways partnerships were affected during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Existing partnerships were strengthened during the pandemic. Participants identified that they had the most existing relationships with Colleges/Universities (257 relationships), Libraries (244), K-8 Schools (201), High Schools, (198), and Community/Recreation Centers (174). During the pandemic, the most new relationships were established with similar types of organizations: Colleges/Universities (73 new relationships), Community/Recreation Centers (69). K-8 Schools (68), High Schools (65), Libraries (63), as well as Farmer's Markets/Community Gardens (64). However, as a percentage of new relationship types (those formed as a percentage of all relationships of that type), we see that where participants were reaching out to new types of organizations, they established those with Detention Centers/Prisons (43%), Farmer's Markets/Community Gardens (40%), Homeless Shelters/Emergency Housing (40%), and Hospitals/Clinics/Health Facilities (39%). It is worth noting that, in particular, the opening of new relationships with food-related organizations is consistent with findings from other sector surveys by PA Humanities, such as the 2022 Recovery and Regrowth Survey and 2023-2024 PA CultureCheck.

The pandemic disrupted conventional modes of connection and interaction for humanities practitioners, compelling them to explore alternative avenues, particularly through enhanced community collaborations. Practitioners recognized a positive shift and heightened willingness among organizations to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships for

{ FIGURE 13 }

Percentage of Relationship Types that are New

During the pandemic, humanities practitioners formed new relationships

Detention center/prison	43%
Farmer's market or community garden	40%
Homeless shelter/ emergency housing	40%
hospital/clinic/ health facility	39%
Day care/after-school care	34%
Food pantry/food assistance site	32%
Public square or plaza	32%
Other (please specify)	32%
Places of work or business	29%
Community or recreation center	28%
Senior center/residence	27%
Park(s)	27%
Place(s) of worship	27%
K-8 school	25%
High school	25%
College/university	22%
Libraries	21%
Pre-school	19%

event hosting and promotion. Collaborative ventures proved invaluable, where organizations shared spaces, exchanged insights, and pooled resources, enabling a more thoughtful approach to their collective work and audience engagement. One practitioner noted:

> I think that this is a positive is that organizations are more willing to partner with one another to bring events in, and that's been something really wonderful to think about when you have another organization saying, oh, you're bringing an author in. Well, do you know this person, or we can offer this space, or we started collaborating with the local artists to help us promote some of our writers. So that part of it, I think, is interesting because it helps us really. I look at what is the work we're doing and then you know who's our audience now, and not just clinging to something from before, but really thinking about knowledge and resources.

Virtual engagement emerged as a catalyst, stimulating the need for organizations to reassess their partnerships and community outreach strategies. This shift not only highlighted the importance of engaging underserved communities but also emphasized the strengthening of community partnerships driven by technological advancements as imperative to adapt to new norms. A focus group participant stated: "It has become more important but more difficult to reach the underserved community. One positive is that community partnerships have been strengthened through necessity and through technology advancements."

The nature of support provided within these partnerships varied, encompassing aspects beyond traditional programming, including critical support like providing social services, supporting social media amplification, offering fundraising assistance, and making safe spaces available for social activism. This allowed for a broadened perspective on partnerships, showcased the diversity of collaborative efforts and the multifaceted role networks play in the humanities ecosystem. "We listened when partners said they did not need programming, but they needed other support: social media support, safe spaces for protestors, fundraising help. Our ideas around what creative partnerships can look like grew enormously."

The events of the last three years supported a shift in the way that humanities practitioners and organizations engage in partnerships (see Figure 13). As they deepened their work with existing partners, humanities practitioners and organizations sought to holistically address the broader needs of individuals and communities they serve by letting them set the agenda. Rather than relying on existing program models, humanities practitioners reimagined their work to better meet the needs of the people and communities they serve in new ways.

THE EXPERIENCES *of* BIPOC HUMANITIES PRACTITIONERS

Survey responses revealed differences in the career experiences of BIPOC humanities practitioners, which we explored more fully through multiple focus group conversations virtually statewide, in Pittsburgh at City of Asylum, Reading at Barrio Alegria, and at PA Humanities offices in Philadelphia with the Drexel team and BIPOC advisors from those communities. These conversations revealed opportunities to better support BIPOC practitioners. They also shed light on the importance of valuing lived experience, mentorship, and multiple pathways to professional success.

Career Experiences of BIPOC Humanities Practitioners

> This work is important to me because I believe that people possess the power to transform their lives if given the proper tools, support and illumination around how systems are designed to exacerbate problems across generations. However, when a structurally marginalized group is empowered to take the reins of their economic destiny, they can circumvent the pitfalls of the system and set a more virtuous cycle in place.

The Discovery Project shows that BIPOC practitioners have significant experience in the humanities. The humanities field has traditionally favored educational attainment and professional degrees over lived experience and field experience. While both the degrees and experience have value, our findings suggest that practical experience deserves more recognition in the field. In our research, we discovered that humanities practitioners learn what it takes to be successful once they are on the job, even if they have a humanities degree. They value experience as a critical asset. In this section, we explore the experiences and educational attainment of BIPOC humanities practitioners.

A critical insight gathered from the perspectives of BIPOC practitioners sheds light on their career trajectory within the humanities. These practitioners express concerns about the career guidance within the humanities community, particularly regarding long-term employment prospects:

> I never thought I'd work in museums or cultural institutions because nobody told me it was a real job...nobody ever said to me, this could be your job...I didn't know I could have a job in it until [I was] 30. And somebody said "why don't you work there, you always be there?". I'm like, wait a second for real you can pay bills...I grew up going to museums. And so it's the natural field [for] who I am as a person. Secondly, because I wanted to be a possibility model to other people who came into the game late.

When asked to define the term 'possibility model,' the practitioner replied: "I can talk to them about my transition into the industry because I didn't hear about traditional entry points and I was able to kind of skirt around the gatekeeping of this industry...the work is also important because I'm working in my community, like literally my neighbors." Their narratives emphasize the need for mentorship and guidance, illuminating the absence of traditional entry points and highlighting the importance of serving as 'possibility models' for emerging professionals.

> **"Possibility models" are people who serve as tangible examples and sources of inspiration for others. In the humanities, these models demonstrate the ability to thrive in a field where traditional entry points and guidance may be lacking.**

Survey responses from individuals identifying as Latinx shed light on their entry into the humanities field through active participation in community organizations. This pathway signifies a formative route into the humanities, emphasizing the role of community engagement and early involvement

in shaping their careers. Examples of career entry points for Latinx cultural workers include one person who stated: "I'm an artist and had an internship for arts and management with PA Council of the Arts. That's how I got my start and learned about the state funding process and so on."

A notable discovery pertains to the emerging demographic of Latinx humanities practitioners in Pennsylvania. A substantial proportion, 60.9%, identifies as first-generation college graduates. Combined with the significant proportion reporting 1 to 5 years of experience, these insights depict the landscape of young, Latinx humanities practitioners within the state.

Similarly, survey responses from individuals identifying as "Black or African American" highlight their initiation into the humanities through community involvement and arts-related activities:
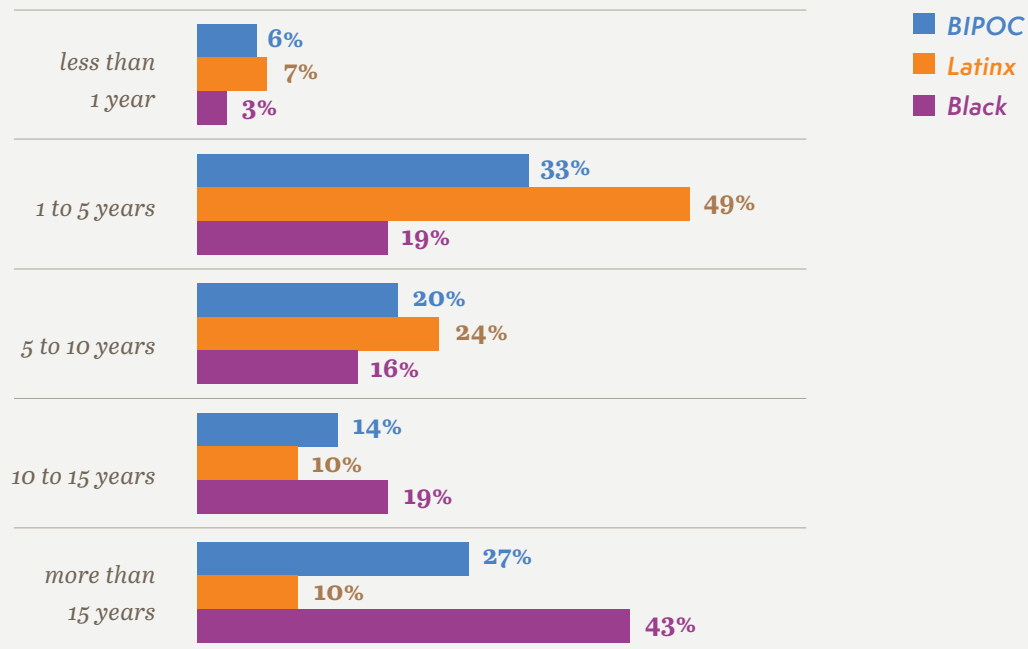
> I took African dance classes (often at a gym or special workshops) and attended performances before performing and then managing arts programming myself.

> I gained experience through both direct professional experiences, and formalized arts administrative trainings to foster the development of the creative-centric curriculum encouraging the improvement of economic conditions for artists.

Delving deeper into the data, disparities are evident between different BIPOC communities (Figure 14). Black humanities practitioners, with 57.7% having obtained a college degree, were significantly further along in their career in contrast to the Latinx population, with 43.2% reporting that they had 15 or more years of experience working in the humanities.

{ **FIGURE 14** }

BIPOC Practitioners have Significant Experience in the Humanities

	BIPOC	Latinx	Black
less than 1 year	6%	7%	3%
1 to 5 years	33%	49%	19%
5 to 10 years	20%	24%	16%
10 to 15 years	14%	10%	19%
more than 15 years	27%	10%	43%

Educational Attainment of Humanities Practitioners

"I am not the first person to do historical research and present it. However, I have access to tools (the internet, academic databases, digitized local newspapers, etc.) that earlier community black historians did not. I want to make sure that this history is not forgotten and is read by future generations."

In Pennsylvania, an analysis of all humanities practitioners shows a high level of educational attainment. A significant proportion, comprising 81% of this cohort, have achieved either a bachelor's or a graduate or professional degree. BIPOC practitioners are less likely to hold a graduate or professional degree compared to their white counterparts. In spite of systemic barriers, BIPOC individuals have developed significant and diverse ways to gain experience in the field.

Intriguingly, 43% of humanities practitioners identify as first-generation college graduates, signifying a noteworthy proportion in this demographic. This is particularly true for BIPOC humanities practitioners, more than half of whom identify as first-generation college graduates. Nationwide, many college graduates are first generation, and humanities study is on the rise at community colleges, where the majority of students nationwide attend higher education.[24] Moreover, a distinction emerges when comparing urban and rural settings, with 61% of urban practitioners demonstrating higher degree attainment, contrasting with 46% among their rural counterparts.

Program Support for BIPOC Humanities Practitioners

"What motivates me is to be able to continue transmitting my culture. It is very important because I continue to transmit and practice my profession with these children, which I practiced for 18 years in my country of origin."

BIPOC workers, notably Black humanities practitioners, rely more on family and friends to support their programming initiatives. BIPOC workers overall reported more financial reliance on family and friends to support their programming. Black humanities practitioners reported that 43.2% of their program support comes from family and friends, while Latinx humanities practitioners reported this at 25.6%, a significant difference compared to non-BIPOC practitioners, for whom support from family and friends makes up just 15.2% of their overall program support, with the majority of support coming from grant funding.

These findings underscore the necessity of addressing the educational and career disparities prevalent among BIPOC practitioners within the humanities. Initiatives focusing on mentorship, career guidance, and fostering a supportive network are crucial in leveling the playing field and ensuring a diverse and thriving humanities community that represents the communities they serve and has a deeper understanding of those communities' issues.

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[24] Jaschik, Scott. "Humanities Are Shrinking, Except at Community Colleges." Inside Higher Ed, June 13, 2021. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/06/14/study-finds-community-colleges-are-only-colleges-world-growing-humanities.

IDENTIFYING *the* NEXT GENERATION *of* HUMANITIES SUPPORT *and* LEADERSHIP

One significant insight from the research centers around inquiry into who will conduct and support the next generation of humanities activity. This underscores the pivotal role that financial resources, career development opportunities, and professional engagement play in supporting humanities practitioners. Two factors contribute to concerns about identifying the next generation of support and leadership – a lack of volunteers, and an underdeveloped career pipeline. These concerns were raised repeatedly in survey responses and focus group discussions related to questions about the challenges and opportunities of the last few years, including the pandemic and recovery.

The older generation is worried about how humanities practice will be transmitted to the next generation. Being a "calling," as practitioners described their humanities work in our research, has a downside. Humanities practitioners do this work because they love it, but a lack of funding and, perhaps, societal respect for the profession make it harder to overcome the other challenges practitioners face.

Volunteers Are Getting Harder to Find

Though our initial survey did not explicitly categorize practitioners as volunteers, our data analysis revealed that a notable portion of the survey identified themselves as "never paid" for their contributions to the field. Volunteer and unpaid practitioners represent a prevalent labor group, second only to full-time practitioners. This finding is corroborated by the responses to our open-ended survey questions, where the frequency of volunteer engagement emerged as the highest in relation to board participation and broader community support.

Humanities practitioners have voiced apprehensions regarding volunteer retention in the post-pandemic phase, particularly as organizations endeavor to rebuild their volunteer databases following a hiatus in in-person opportunities due to organizational closures.

Additionally, practitioners have acknowledged the challenge of retaining younger volunteers. This trend is potentially attributed to a shifting economic landscape wherein families, constrained by time commitments, opt for supporting organizations through financial contributions rather than active participation. As one practitioner reflected:

> I don't know if it's a longer cycle thing that's happening, or it's partly because of the pandemic. But it seems like many of our organizations now have volunteer leadership. Most of us are in our seventies, and that's becoming a real concern..If you go back 20 or 30 years, young, 30- 40-year old bankers or business people who wanted a good public profile, stepped right up and ran those campaigns. Well, they're the same people still running the campaigns, except it's 30 years later...I don't see the 30, 40, even the 50-year-olds stepping up to help in volunteer organizations.

This finding points to the problem of a lack of intergenerational diversity. Formal volunteering rates dropped in every demographic category between 2019 and 2021, though informal volunteering remained steady.[25] Practitioners theorized that this may be because of a shifting economic landscape in which families have limited time sharing capacities, but instead choose to support organizations. One said: "It's harder to bring [volunteers] in. You may be able to bring them in for the program, bringing their kids as a participant, but it's very hard to engage with the full-time working parents right now, and it might also have to do with the amount of activities kids are involved in. If they have young kids, it just seems like there's not a whole lot of time left for civic involvement."

Humanities practitioners may benefit from the development of new and innovative engagement strategies to attract volunteers. One of our listening session participants noted how a rural group celebrating ethnic culture does it, recounting how they have many volunteers who come together, young and old, to make food and combat loneliness together: "We are very much like a community center for people." Young practitioners also should be encouraged (and compensated or otherwise supported) to serve on the boards of humanities organizations, presenting them with exposure to the humanities community, affording valuable professional development opportunities, and rendering crucial support as organizations realign their outreach efforts in the post-pandemic landscape. Such an approach could help foster a renewed sense of engagement and sustainability within the humanities sector, and support the next generation of humanities leadership.

Who's Next? Challenges in the Humanities Career Pipeline

The current struggle to engage volunteers intersects with a larger concern about the humanities career pipeline. In our survey analysis, we noticed a small number of survey respondents in the 18-24 age category, which could suggest that people do not begin to enter or consider themselves a humanities practitioner until later in life. We also became aware that humanities practitioners, particularly younger ones, are facing challenges related to burnout, partly as a result of organizational restructuring and funding challenges occurring in the wake of the pandemic.

One younger humanities practitioner observed:

> I think a secondary problem that comes with the barrier of funding is burnout because there are fewer of us doing more work. So, in my own job, I have to do the entirety of the work with our teen population, in addition to working with our Makerspace, in addition to working with circulation and being a front-facing person in that department and doing grantwriting. And it's one of those jobs where I love what I do and I really enjoy it. But I am very tired, and I'm only 25, so I really shouldn't be this tired already. But the passion is sort of what's expected to drive us in our jobs, and we get told that a lot, that, like, hey, you're doing something that's fun, and that you want to do, but they don't realize that that workload and the lack of funding puts barriers in place to us being able to do it well, and in the long term.

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25 Schneider, Erin, and Tim J. Marshall. "At Height of Pandemic, More Than Half of People Age 16 and Over Helped Neighbors, 23% Formally Volunteered." Census.gov, January 25, 2023. https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2023/01/volunteering-and-civic-life-in-america.html.

"

Most of us are in our seventies, and that's becoming a real concern... I don't see the 30, 40, even the 50-year-olds stepping up to help in volunteer organizations."

Another practitioner, speaking to the continued relevance of humanities activity amidst the ongoing impact of the pandemic on humanities employment, said:

> On a practical level, [this has affected me] hugely. My organization became much more amenable to long-term flexible work arrangements. The normalization of conducting meetings via Zoom has cut down on travel costs. Organizations with collections have suffered layoffs and have shown interest in different topics than they did before. The relevance itself has not shifted - in some ways, certain aspects of my work seem more relevant as we understand that the US workforce is changing and collections staff at collecting institutions may not be as secure as they once were.

Centering research in people's experience has implications for the field, philanthropy, and government. Coupled with our earlier observations of the challenges to entering and sustaining a humanities career, it is clear that not only is humanities work often undervalued, but its career pipeline is underdeveloped. This revelation underscores the critical need for a nuanced examination of the working conditions and career support for humanities practitioners, particularly regarding their well-being, resilience, and career pathway development and opportunities.[26]

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How have events of the past three years impacted your work, your cultural connections, and your community overall?
2. As you pivoted to navigate the constant change and uncertainty of the past three years, what went well? What didn't work? Most importantly, what did you learn?
3. How has the past three years changed the way you work externally (with community members and partners) and internally (with staff and board or colleagues in your network)?
4. What have you had to "give up" in the past several years? What, conversely, has grown, become more "in focus" or important to you, your organization, your network, and your community?
5. What have you tried to foster the next generation of humanities practitioners or expand the volunteer pipeline?

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[26] See section VI for a discussion of the implications raised here.

V. Why is Humanities Work Important?

"

I don't use the word humanities at all, and the way I describe it is I work in the community, the community's archive, and I am here for the community."

KEY POINTS

- The humanities are key to human flourishing and happiness, not just economic or social benefit

- Reframing the humanities in terms of personal benefits and motivations, known as a capabilities approach, offers a new way to think about the humanities as a fundamental human right

- Practitioners often use terms other than "humanities" to describe their work, necessitating rethinking of how language matches practice

- Humanities are critical to solve the pressing challenges of our time, from social isolation to preservation of history, to promoting equity and justice

- Participants saw the humanities as critical for creating successful community spaces, historic preservation, arts and humanities appreciation and social connection

This section is about the importance of the humanities to its practitioners and its audiences. It explores prevalent ways of talking about the value of the humanities, exploring the intrinsic or extrinsic benefits people derive from the humanities. It proposes a different framing of the benefits of the humanities, based on the capabilities approach, which describes how experiences like the humanities help us discover meaning in our lives, flourish, and build our futures together. This section also discusses the impacts of humanities work as described by practitioners through the survey and focus groups. We explore how practitioners talk about the work they do, including how and when they use the word "humanities." We look at what other words they use to describe the work as well.

The main goal of this section is to help make the case for the value of the humanities, based on the powerful testimony of humanities practitioners themselves. How can the wisdom they provide catalyze new ways of emphasizing the importance and urgency of the applied humanities in today's context? We ground this work in the conversations occurring today in the field of the humanities around scope, reach, and impact.[27]

Throughout, we emphasize the importance of social justice and the humanities and the arts as fundamental human rights. We see a connection between the capabilities framing and the applied humanities as a vehicle for the promotion of social justice, transformation, and the empowerment of communities. In so doing, we redefine the values and resources of the humanities, highlighting the multifaceted benefits of humanities work and the importance of diversifying resources and building networks.

HOW PRACTITIONERS DESCRIBE *their* WORK

In the survey and focus groups, we asked how humanities practitioners describe their work to others. For us, it was important to grasp the narratives and terms employed across Pennsylvania in order to better understand the framing of this vital practice. Below is a word cloud that showcased the terms practitioners used. Previous research about public perceptions of the humanities showed that there is not a common understanding of the term humanities and that many associated keywords and concepts may generate more traction in thinking about the broader set of practice that comprise the humanities.[28]

{ FIGURE 15 }

Words Humanities Practitioners Use To Describe Their Work

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[27] Humanities and Human Flourishing. "Humanities and Human Flourishing." Accessed May 14, 2024. https://www. humanitiesandhumanflourishing.org; Liu, Alan, Abigail Droge, Scott Kleinman, Lindsay Thomas, Dan C. Baciu, and Jeremy Douglass. "What Everyone Says: Public Perceptions of the Humanities in the Media." Daedalus 151, no. 3 (August 22, 2022): 19–39; Pawelski, James O. "The Positive Humanities: A Focus on Human Flourishing." Daedalus 151, no. 3 (August 22, 2022): 206–21; "Thriving Together: A Springboard for Equitable Recovery & Resilience in Communities Across America." CDC Foundation and Well Being Trust, July 4, 2020. https://thriving.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Springboard-Main-Narrative-For-Print-.pdf.
[28] American Academy of Arts & Sciences. "The Humanities in American Life." Washington, DC: American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2020. https://www.amacad.org/publication/humanities-american-life.

The word cloud in Figure 15 shows the keywords practitioners use to describe their work. The most prominent words include "community," "people," "history/historical," "create," "public," and "story." From what we see in this word cloud, it is clear that this is a people- and community-centered activity when it comes to the applied humanities.

{ FIGURE 16 }

Other Words (Besides "Humanities") Used By Practitioners to Describe Their Projects or Programs

We also generated a word cloud of the other words people use to describe their projects and programs beyond the initial ones (see Figure 16). "History" and "community" appeared again, quite prominently, but so did "art/arts" as well as "educational," and "culture/cultural." This word cloud shows there is an overlap between arts and humanities among practitioners in Pennsylvania, and that they see themselves working across both domains. Our findings here expand on PA Humanities' recent study *Humanities in Action* where practitioners saw "the humanities as a dynamic process rather than a static definition: a way of doing – not just thinking – that fosters social change and promotes the betterment of humanity."[29]

Top themes from the participants

When exploring the way humanities practitioners describe their work, we coded all the responses from the survey and explored quotes from the focus groups to determine which themes were brought up the most. We assigned a code to each one of the themes and counted how often they occurred. The top four coded themes were: humanities providing a community hub (28 instances); historic preservation (25); cultural appreciation (21); and social connection (21). Other prominent themes included supporting youth, social justice, storytelling, and creating safe spaces.

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[29] Donofrio, Julie T., Katie Levesque, Paul Farber, A.L. McCollough, and Alli Davis. "Humanities in Action: A National Perspective." Philadelphia, PA: PA Humanities, 2022. https://pahumanities.org/national/.

Providing a Community Hub

Participants explained that they serve everyone in the community and even in communities beyond their own. The public humanities provides places for people to gather together and create fellowship. This was especially true of librarians. One survey participant explained, "Our mission statement is to act as a community hub; a welcoming place for all people to learn, grow, and connect." Another survey participant explained that the library is a place where "individuals can learn to take care of themselves, express themselves, and enter without any economic, financial, or political barriers." One listening session participant, reflecting on this finding, linked his local library's work to the creation of vital third places for diverse communities struggling to connect: "There's a lot going on there that makes it a third place for lots of people that don't have other third places in many ways."

The word community came up frequently in the descriptions of what humanities practitioners do. They are providing safe, judgment-free spaces in which people can fully embrace their sense of self and expand their horizons without limitations of time or cost. That being said, it takes resources on the part of the humanities practitioners to provide these spaces and services (see our closing Call to Action). It is important to recognize from our findings that humanities often takes place in community-based spaces – not a city hall or typical space of power. These non-traditional places are spaces that foster agency, power, and influence created by people, not by institutions.

Historic Preservation

The preservation of history was another important aspect of how practitioners describe their work and its goals. There is a strong current of history that runs throughout the academic and the applied humanities, and we saw it on display in the focus group and survey responses. Whether this is the preservation of tangible, physical history, as in the Vanka Murals in Pittsburgh and the various historical museums around the Commonwealth, or the intangible history of cultural, social, and political narratives – the desire among participants to keep history alive shone through their responses.

One participant talked about studying and sharing military history about people of color. This participant, self-identifying as a queer, gender nonconforming person, explained that people often underestimate their knowledge of such histories. But the work of elevating these often-suppressed or under acknowledged histories is a passion, and sharing them brings forth aspects of history that many Pennsylvanians do not yet know.

Another respondent talked about the themes of love, justice, and empathy in talking about Pittsburgh's place in history. Their emphasis on social justice and the intersection with history and art means that the stories of Pittsburgh's past can come alive in the interpretation and retelling of these stories.

Finally, some participants use the word preservation to describe the historical work that they do. For them, preservation is a form of advocacy: advocacy for history and the sites and resources that comprise it. One respondent observed that "When we describe our work...we also use the word preservation, and we say that in terms of preserving Centre County history and also advocacy work for the preservation of historic sites and resources."

Humanities Deepen Connections to Culture

Humanities is often linked to arts and culture in the responses to the PA Humanities Discovery Project. Arts and humanities travel together in the work of advancing culture in the Commonwealth. One survey respondent talked about the purpose of their work being to "transmit and make known to our children and community our traditions and culture through dance." This work of intergenerational transmission brings the arts to new communities through cultural preservation and advancement. Often these programs are free to the public, underscoring the need to adequately support the work of practitioners and provide them with resources. Some respondents' purpose is to enrich humanity and the social conditions of their neighborhoods and communities. One said, "We're trying to reach the largest amount of underserved people...with free musical programs to the public. So we're trying to, you know, definitely enrich humanity in that way and enrich the social structure of the area." This sentiment can be linked to the use of the term "humanities" to denote shared humanity as a concept and a practice in the world. Art is seen by leading thinkers as intimately connected to, if not a subset of, the humanities.[30]

[We] transmit and make known to our children and community our traditions and culture through dance."

Social Connection

The last of the four most prominent themes is that of social connection. The connections among people and places fostered by applied humanities practice builds community capacity, social capital, and sets the ground for social justice. One survey respondent explained that this goal comes to fruition through offerings of "free public programming, funded fellowships and residencies, art exhibitions, STEAM workshops with youth, Memory Care art workshops, and an annual sustainability-centered arts and science festival." For them, this is art and humanities as a way of connecting people.

One listening session participant talked about building social connections through foodways and preserving traditional ethnic cultures, explaining that:

> We have tons of volunteers that come and pinch pierogies and make ethnic food, but it also has a connection to the community because a lot of those people are elderly that live around our property. ... It keeps them from being isolated because otherwise we're in rural Carbon County. ... We all saw the study about loneliness being the greatest threat to our health right now.

This theme unites many of the others in this section as other objectives and purposes of the humanities can be seen as a way to build connections across differences, whether of age, gender, race/ethnicity, or even political orientation. The humanities allows for many goals to come together. Art appreciation, historical preservation, and serving as a community hub advance social connection among Pennsylvanians and beyond.

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[30] Butler, Judith. "The Public Futures of the Humanities." Daedalus 151, no. 3 (August 22, 2022): 40–53. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01927.

WHAT MOTIVATES PRACTITIONERS *to* DO THIS WORK?

In addition to asking practitioners about how they describe their work, we also asked them what motivates them to do this work, and why it is important to them. By centering practitioner voices in the research, we demonstrate the importance of a capabilities approach in practice. We coded survey responses to determine the most prominent motivations and found that the top four motivations were: enriching the lives of others (189 responses); fostering community success (148); their love of the work (138); and learning from history (101 responses). Other themes mentioned include arts awareness, enriching lives of artists, and generating reciprocity between humanities practitioners and their audiences. In the sections that follow, we detail the top four motivations.

Enriching lives of others

The work of humanities practitioners inspired us as we reviewed dozens of stories depicting ways in which they enriched the lives of others. One respondent described the humanities as "critical community work" to help people understand different cultures and work together happily and peacefully. Others spoke of being "blessed to do this work" as a calling because of the ability they possessed for addressing cycles of intergenerational trauma. They could be a "silent champion" for the young people who needed their support, and transform the narratives that seemingly govern some young people's life chances. Humanities transforms lives through telling new, collective stories about how to live, writing new shared histories, and working to overcome the forces that seek to divide people from one another.

Some respondents spoke of the humanities as opening doors for others without money or privilege, because those same doors had once been opened to them. One respondent said that this work saves lives, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, by connecting people to things that mattered to them beyond the challenges of the moment. Many humanities practitioners kept their work going through the thick of the pandemic, lockdowns and distancing included, as we learned in section IV.

Other respondents talked about the ability of the humanities to create spaces that could counter burnout from an American culture that focuses too heavily on productivity and output. Humanities provides space and time to have conversations and activities that allow people to lean into their creativity, finding time and space to pursue their passions for things like history, craft, storytelling, and literature.

For some respondents, being culturally responsive was an important goal and benefit of the humanities. Humanities practitioners value and center the lived experiences of participants and their identities. For one survey participant, their goal was "to educate children on the value of their birth culture and mother tongues." By providing access to culture in an unadulterated form, humanities practitioners can advance new narratives and recover that which has been lost or deliberately suppressed. Some of this work is an uphill climb, as in the participant who spoke about the importance of advancing Native American culture, especially in a setting where this population is forgotten or ignored. To advance the cause of the rights of underrepresented people can be controversial work in the current political climate, but humanities practitioners are advancing these social goals despite the challenges.

Community Success

Another motivation for Pennsylvania's humanities practitioners to do this work is the goal of fostering community success. In communities threatened by political polarization, declining population, or frayed social connection, humanities can be a way to knit back together community ties through positive interactions. As one survey participant stated, "There is too much "tearing down" going on in our world. We need more 'building up.'" This pursuit of community success was often framed as place-based work, which echoes the findings of section III. For some respondents, love of place was connected to the love of the land and the stories it contains.

Community success is partially achieved through the weaving of stronger social fabric and social connections. Respondents spoke of wanting people to stay in the community despite the great changes their communities were facing. They spoke of the desire to make people feel welcome and wanted in the places they reside. To build intentional community or even invoking Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "beloved community," was part of the goal set for these humanities practitioners.

Love of the Work

One of the most affecting themes in the research was the love and dedication with which practitioners pursued humanities work. There are so many poignant examples in the data of testimonials – offered without specific prompting – specifying the deep passion felt for this work. One survey respondent explained, "This is what I have chosen as my life pursuit. It is extremely important to me. I want people to be heard. I want to help people fulfill their dreams in the literary and arts communities." Some spoke of humanities work providing a sense of purpose and belonging.

> **It would be easier to ask what doesn't motivate me to do this work. This is the work; what gets me up in the morning and inspires me."**

For some, this passion took the form of a love of learning and of sharing historical resources. To share narratives and stories across time and generations is very rewarding to Discovery Project respondents. One stated that a warm welcome to a preschooler at a public library can shape a life of libraries, learning and discovery. This is what gets practitioners up in the morning and inspires their efforts.

The goal of social (and in this case environmental) justice animates the work of humanities practitioners. One stated, "I also care deeply about the natural world and about our interdependence with it, particularly in the face of accelerating climate change and biodiversity loss. I can't not do it. It is a primal drive for me." Another spoke directly to the work of social justice: "We desire to break down the walls of race, history, culture and stereotypes in order to show people their similarities."

Many of the participants spoke of the work as a calling and we know it takes an incredible amount of resources to do this job well. Even though many humanities practitioners are volunteers, their work still costs money to do, including facilities, labor, materials costs, and more. And many practitioners are not volunteers, or are not volunteers by choice. So, proper support for the practice of the humanities is essential for it continue to thrive.

Learning from History

A large proportion of practitioners were motivated to do this work in order to learn, and help others learn, from history. One theme that came up throughout survey and focus group responses was the desire to advance new narratives that can recover untold or suppressed histories, and help foster new understandings of people and place throughout Pennsylvania. This is important and challenging work, especially in political climates that are fraught with many forms of division.

I feel strongly that connecting to our shared history is an enterprise in civic action."

Participants felt that history provides us with examples both ordinary and extraordinary. One participant said it was about "ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances." Another participant stated that Pennsylvania was specifically important in American history, and that its stories needed to be foregrounded in our understanding because it is "tied to our national story and heritage."

This work is based in time, just as much as it can be place-based: "My work here at our library makes me feel as though I am making a difference, both to people living today and the generations yet to come. To top it off, I can't help but believe that through it we are honoring the ancestors of those we serve." This intergenerational work spans history and creates it at the same time.

Finally, on the subject of social justice, participants felt that historical narratives serve the purpose of connecting and reconnecting individuals in communities. This includes highlighting stories of different races, sexes and religions and their important contributions to humanities in Pennsylvania. As one survey respondent put it, "I want to remind locals that there is a great deal to be proud of in our past as well as potential for a more positive future."

HUMANITIES WORK *is* VITAL, BUT *is* THERE *a* MARKETING PROBLEM?

Looking at the word clouds and quotes, the word "humanities" is conspicuous in its lack of emphasis. We were curious how, when, and how often Pennsylvania practitioners used the word "humanities" to describe their work. We asked survey and focus group participants this question and received some interesting and perhaps surprising responses. We learned that only a quarter of survey respondents use the term humanities to describe their work; 39% do not use it; and 36% sometimes use the word (see Figure 17).

{ FIGURE 17 }

Practitioners' Use Of The Term "Humanities" When Describing Their Projects Or Programs
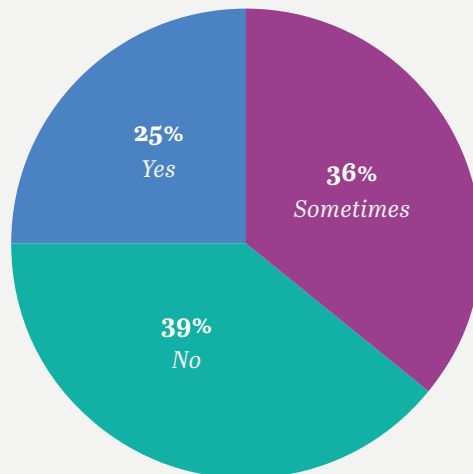
Our findings echo other recent research and case making within the academic community for the value of the humanities in the higher education sector. The 2019 *Survey of the Humanities in American Life* conducted by the American Academy of Arts & Sciences found that there is a lack of a common understanding of the term "humanities" in the American population, even as a substantial majority of survey respondents believe the humanities confers significant personal and societal benefits.[31] In 2021, Penn State professor Eric Hayot wrote in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about the marketing problem facing (particularly) the academic humanities. [32] Among his calls for the reform of curricula, Hayot explains that the humanities are an education for an entire life, not just a particular job or even a career. This is consistent with findings from the

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[31] American Academy of Arts & Sciences. "The Humanities in American Life." Washington, DC: American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2020. https://www.amacad.org/publication/humanities-american-life.
[32] Hayot, Eric. "The Humanities Have a Marketing Problem." The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 22, 2021. https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-humanities-have-a-marketing-problem.

research of Alan Liu and his colleagues, who found that the humanities have faced an ongoing crisis in the media, in part because they run counter to the individualistic, economic logic of their day.[33] Yet Liu et al believe that humanities are key to solving the grand challenges of our time, such as health, climate change, and economic and social equality. They issue a call to action to advance and embrace the humanities as a tool for societal change.

In our research, which focuses on practitioners across disciplines and sectors within and outside academia, we asked participants when they use the term "humanities." They mostly use the term when talking to funders, applying for grants, or talking about human rights and human flourishing. The use of the term makes sense when applying for grants from federal or state humanities organizations; they want their work to be relevant to the core funders of the humanities using the funders' own terminology, even if they do not use the word in with their own audiences.

Sometimes they use the term when talking about history or subjects more associated with the academic humanities. As one survey participant reflected, "We use 'humanities' primarily when working with projects that have a historic angle or when we are collaborating with the local school districts."

A focus group participant explained that they use the related terms, but not "humanities," when talking about human rights and humanism:

> I'd say it's human-centered work. I've never actually used the word humanities, but I always end up using the word like Humanity. The residency program exists to affirm the humanity and creativity, intellectual ability of all the artists that we host and because it's a long-term residency opportunity that comes with hopefully integration into the community.

This use of the term "humanities" reflects similar findings from the state humanities council community in *Humanities at the Crossroads: Indiana Case Study* in 2014 and PA Humanities' *Humanities in Action* in 2022. In the Indiana study, the researchers found that the vast majority of the respondents said that they never or only sometimes use the term "humanities" with their constituencies.[34] Likewise, PA Humanities researchers found that nearly all their interviewees did not define their work as the humanities because they viewed the term "as alienating to the audiences with whom they work."[35] For one listening session participant, the gatekeeping of the humanities can be restrictive in academia, noting: "We keep getting bounced out of the humanities because they don't think that we belong there, but we're media and all we do is storytelling."

This begs a question (to be explored later in section V): Does the humanities have a branding problem? If many humanities practitioners are using other terms to describe their work (except when they are talking to their funders), should another set of terms be developed and deployed in the field? Does the use of the term when talking about humanism and human rights point in a generative direction?

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[33] Liu, Alan, Abigail Droge, Scott Kleinman, Lindsay Thomas, Dan C. Baciu, and Jeremy Douglass. "What Everyone Says: Public Perceptions of the Humanities in the Media." Daedalus 151, no. 3 (August 22, 2022): 19–39. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01926.
[34] Sullivan, Felicia M., Nancy N. Connor, Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, Peter Levine, and Elizabeth Lynn. "Humanities at the Crossroads: The Indiana Case Study Survey Report." Medford, MA: CIRCLE at the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, January 2014. https://indianahumanities.org/program/humanities-at-the-crossroads/.
[35] Donofrio, Julie T., Katie Levesque, Paul Farber, A.L. McCollough, and Alli Davis. "Humanities in Action: A National Perspective." Philadelphia, PA: PA Humanities, 2022. https://pahumanities.org/national/.

That being said, the term does have its defenders, mostly among practitioners who use it in educational settings. This evocative quote from a focus group participant encapsulates the benefits some practitioners note when working to define the humanities with their students:

> I'll mention that I do use the term most frequently. I use it, and I teach in a community college and any of the various classes I teach are within the humanities and I always ask my students whether they even know what the word means, and without exception they never do...I think just asking ourselves and talking about what it means to be a human, what we have in common, and what our differences are and how we can grow from those kinds of conversations.
>
> And what I like about using the term and trying to define and understand the term is that it almost is like liberating in my classes. Once you establish what it is you're doing, and I think that's transferable to any humanities program you do. If you start out by thinking about what the humanities are, then it just kind of uncorks people. They're more willing to participate and see the class or whatever environment as a two way street as opposed to you know, we're traditionally thinking of somehow the leader, student, environment and so I do think it's important that we keep using the word, and that we all understand what the word means when we do our work in advocacy.

From this quote, we see that the term can be activated in the imaginations of participants and defined in a way that is consonant with a participatory, connected experience of the humanities. In this focus group participant's view, the process of collective definition is a generative tool that allows the humanities to come alive. One listening session participant stated the charge eloquently, positing, "It's not renaming, maybe it's redefining. Spreading the tendrils of humanities into these other areas that touch on what the humanities covers. Reclaiming the ground."

Making the case for the humanities

A primary purpose of this section is to build the case for the humanities in Pennsylvania and beyond based on respondents' views and experiences. This work needs robust funding and political support to thrive, in addition to the work of committed practitioners like the ones who took part in this research project. Building a case for support is vital, in a context where the humanities is sometimes seen as in decline relative to other fields. One survey participant explained it well: "We have focused on STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] for so long that we often forget about the humanities to our detriment. I think we are seeing the result of focusing too heavily on math and science and technology without also engaging in thinking about how these things affect us as humans." This sentiment is not meant to devalue the important work of STEM practitioners; rather, its purpose is to remind us that we also need to advance the humanities as part of the fundamental work of living as humans. In fact, the Humanities for All research conducted by the National Humanities Alliance Foundation shows the range of a suite of publicly engaged humanities practices including engaged teaching and research across a wide variety of disciplines.[36] The humanities are a vital contributor to this work, instead of being seen as a "frill" in the words of philosopher Martha Nussbaum in her book, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*.[37]

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[36] National Humanities Alliance. "Humanities for All: About." Accessed May 14, 2024. https://humanitiesforall.org/about.

[37] Nussbaum, Martha C. Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Benefits of the work

In the survey, we asked participants: why is your work important to others? What benefits does it bring to people, culture, and communities? When coding the data, we analyzed the responses according to whether they emphasized intrinsic or extrinsic benefits. In our definitions of intrinsic (innate or essential) and extrinsic (instrumental or secondary) benefits of the humanities, we are guided by the landmark RAND Corporation publication *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts*, which has influenced a generation of arts and humanities advocates.[38] According to the authors of the study, intrinsic benefits provide participants with "meaning and with a distinctive type of pleasure and emotional stimulation."[39] These benefits include: captivation by a work of art, pleasure, expanded capacity for empathy, cognitive growth, creation of social bonds, and expression of communal meanings. These benefits are both individual and communal, and occur during the experience of engaging with a work of art or humanities, both in the period afterwards and over a lifetime.

By contrast, extrinsic or instrumental benefits provide measurable benefits that do not come directly from the work of arts or humanities itself; rather, they are secondary spillover effects like economic growth and student learning. These extrinsic benefits include improvement to student test scores, creative thinking, more school attendance and more. They have a role in promoting mental and physical health in a wide variety of populations and for a variety of conditions. They promote social capital and civic organization. Also, arts and humanities have economic benefits, both direct and indirect, which advocates frequently mention in conversations about the efficacy of these forms of human expression.

Given the manifold benefits of humanities and the arts, we thought it important to explore how survey and focus group participants articulated the value of the work they do. What we found was provocative: survey participants mentioned intrinsic motivations 2.6 times for every one time they mentioned extrinsic benefits (175 versus 68 coded responses). Similar responses occurred among focus group participants.

One key quote from a survey participant speaks powerfully to the intrinsic impacts of the humanities: "It empowers people to see themselves as having skills needed to connect with others, express themselves, and build resistance against people who seek to exploit or oppress them." This participant links self-expression, the ability to connect with others, and the social justice goal of using those skills to build resistance against oppression.

On the extrinsic side, participants articulated the social and economic benefits that the humanities provide. One example from the surveys: "Our work is important to further the recycling of dollars within the creative economy. The benefits are creating jobs, enhancing entrepreneurship within marginalized communities and the benefits are to improve culture, create jobs, decrease financial instability for creative workers." Here we can see the valuable benefits to workforce development and economic development that humanities can provide.

The fact that the extrinsic value of humanities was extolled far less frequently than intrinsic values demonstrates a disconnect with current advocacy practices. Over the last few decades, there has been more emphasis on justifying humanities and arts based on their extrinsic, particularly economic, impacts. These are quantifiable and measurable, in a way that captivation, joy, and empathy are not. Yet the participants in the PA Humanities Discovery Project largely see the value of their work, and their motivations for doing this work, in intrinsic terms.

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[38] McCarthy, Kevin, Elizabeth H. Ondaatje, Laura Zakaras, and Arthur Brooks. "Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts." RAND Corporation, 2004.

[39] Ibid, p. xv

Perhaps the use of extrinsic justifications can be traced to other related sectors such as education and healthcare, where outcomes are measured quantitatively and used to justify government and philanthropic expenditures. Advocates are used to honing their messages in ways they perceive will resonate with those who control the distribution of resources needed to do their work. Yet humanities clearly possesses both intrinsic and extrinsic impacts. These can be set against each other in a binary that can be unhelpful, and not representative of the full range of benefits of the humanities. This is why we propose another way of looking at the value of the humanities: the capabilities approach, which sees humanities as a fundamental human right, which is described in the following section.

THE CASE *for* HUMAN FLOURISHING & HAPPINESS: *A* CAPABILITIES APPROACH *to the* HUMANITIES

❝

I'd say it's human-centered work. I've never actually used the word humanities, but I always end up using the word like humanity."

One of the shortcomings of intrinsic versus extrinsic framing is that it sets up the notion that humanities are either good for one set of reasons or another, or that there is a hierarchy of benefits they provide. It can put practitioners in the habit of using justifications like economic benefit when they are motivated to do their work for intrinsic value. To overcome the shortcomings of the intrinsic versus extrinsic dichotomy, we propose the capabilities approach as a different framing. The capabilities approach is wholly consistent with PA Humanities values and the goals of the applied humanities as understood in this set of reports.

> **The capabilities approach is a belief that there are certain qualities of life that are fundamental to human flourishing and happiness, and need to be fostered among all people in order to allow them to live a good life with meaning and agency for themselves and their community.**

Humanities practice embodies the spirit of the capabilities approach. This approach is tied to the work of Indian economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and the important elaboration and contributions of philosopher Martha Nussbaum. Largely used in the field of international development, the capabilities approach makes clear that we should frame discussions of well-being beyond solely economic metrics such as gross domestic product. These are not the sole determinant of human potential. As one survey respondent explained, the humanities are essential to a feeling of well-being, belonging, and agency: "Sharing experiences and stories as well as creating new ones together fosters a more connected and resilient community; provides opportunity to learn and gain new perspectives, and develops a sense of community that is essential to well-being." Instead of economic development, the theory goes, human flourishing should be at the heart of what we value as a society.

The capability approach speaks to the "beings and doings" of everyday life and the human right to flourish. These take the form of functionings, the outputs of life like being well nourished, getting educated, having housing, and caring for children. If functionings are outputs, capabilities are the baseline conditions and fundamental human rights that allow people to achieve their functionings.[40] Mark Stern and Susan Seifert, creators of the pioneering Social Impact of the Arts Project, found the capabilities approach helpful in understanding the social benefits of arts and culture. We extend these claims to the applied humanities – that providing the conditions for people to do and be the things that they desire enables them to live life to the fullest. It provides a means for talking about human flourishing that does not depend on subdividing the various benefits of the humanities into either intrinsic or extrinsic justifications and having those justifications be in conflict and contention for the attention of potential supporters.

The capabilities approach is consistent with the work of James O. Pawelski, who speaks of the importance of the positive humanities as a tool for human flourishing.[41] It further aligns with the United Nations (UN) Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, which states in Article 27 that, "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."[42] As the arm of the UN charged with international cooperation, knowledge sharing, and mutual understanding, UNESCO champions everyone's right to culture as part of human development. By focusing on human flourishing as a key goal of the humanities, it is possible to link the humanities with the happiness we experience when we live a life of meaning and purpose, a focus on living the good life through humanities inquiry and practice. This is humanities for the benefit of humanity, a people-centered effort that reconnects us with the best elements of our shared human past, and leads towards a more sustainable future.

One listening session participant credited PA Humanities with keeping its focus on human flourishing: "I love the fact that PA Humanities is bringing people together, reminding them of humanity in a time when there's so much polarization; when there's so much technology that often comes between [people] – you know, face to face engagement."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How would you market and make a case for the humanities?
2. How do you describe your work to others? How do you advocate to others about the importance of the work that you do?
3. What are some of the benefits your work has for you, your community, and beyond?
4. What motivates you to do your work? Does the capabilities approach, which reframes the benefits of the humanities in terms of personal benefits and motivations, resonate with how you think about your work? Why or why not?

[40] Zitcer, Andrew, Julie Hawkins, and Neville Vakharia. "A Capabilities Approach to Arts and Culture? Theorizing Community Development in West Philadelphia." Planning Theory & Practice 17, no. 1 (2016): 35–51.
[41] Pawelski, James O. "The Positive Humanities: A Focus on Human Flourishing." Daedalus 151, no. 3 (August 22, 2022): 206–21. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01939.
[42] United Nations. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." United Nations. Accessed June 12, 2024. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

VI. Reframing the Humanities in Pennsylvania

"

I love the fact that PA humanities is bringing people together, reminding them of humanity in a time when there's so much polarization; when there's so much technology that often comes between [people] – you know, face to face engagement."

The humanities in Pennsylvania are a vital, engaging, and human-centered practice. As a fundamental human right and a part of human flourishing and happiness, the humanities have much to teach us. Our research has demonstrated that practitioners have a range of backgrounds, specializations, and identities. They are driven by passion and animated by a shared sense of humanity to pursue this work. The last several years have been challenging for the sector, and practitioners have risen to these challenges with aplomb, deepening existing partnerships and increasing access to the humanities for the public.

In this final section, we look closely at how our findings are reframing the way Pennsylvania practitioners view, value, practice, and research the humanities. We discuss the future of the humanities in Pennsylvania, exploring the changes that are occuring, and how that future might inform ongoing state and national conversations. We make recommendations for how to move forward as a field through calls to action for our many stakeholders, including the humanities community, colleges and universities, philanthropic and government entities, the media, and the general public. We also open up a dialogue about some of the transformative discoveries and emerging issues resulting from this research project. Finally, we close with an invitation to join the movement to reframe the humanities, and embrace a larger vision of its diverse people and practices.

CALL *to* ACTION

After carefully analyzing 541 surveys and engaging in deep conversations through eight focus groups and two listening sessions reflecting on our findings, the PA Humanities Discovery Project illuminates the profound impact and vast potential of the humanities in enriching human experience, building community, and creating change across Pennsylvania. This collaborative effort, grounded in a people-centered approach, has revealed the humanities' critical role in connecting and uplifting diverse communities, highlighting the necessity of amplifying more voices, and strengthening support for practitioners at all career stages. The findings call for a reconsideration of the humanities as a fundamental human right, recognizing them for their central role in everyday human experience and as the creative force for addressing many of our persistent social challenges and asserting our collective humanity, interdependence, and care for one another.

Based on our findings, we recommend the following:

- **Explore a strategic reframing of the humanities as a fundamental human right** that emphasizes their roots in the human experience and in our humanity and that better describes the powerful work happening across sectors. Our participants agree that the humanities are core to human flourishing – that they connect, unify, and uplift. This is an urgent update to the way we talk about and advocate for the humanities. Looking ahead, more of this human-centered, community-driven work is deeply needed. By demystifying our shared language around humanities, we can be poised for collective action and able to seize new opportunities for meaningful change. Programmatic and rebranding efforts, like PA Humanities redefining the humanities as a people-centered pursuit, crafting the tagline, "We find the human connection in the humanities," is an example to the field.

- **Amplify the lived experiences of BIPOC communities,** celebrating and honoring this important asset. Local knowledge should be upheld and supported in the same way the field traditionally recognizes higher education and professional titles in the humanities. In addition, diversifying the staff at cultural and educational institutions can inspire students of color to pursue the humanities as a viable career path. BIPOC-focused professional development and support programs are also needed, including the creation of affinity spaces, continuing education and training opportunities, and further research to highlight BIPOC experiences, needs, and impact.

- **Develop career guidance, mentorships, and support systems** for younger and emerging humanities practitioners, leveraging the value of lived experiences and alternative pathways. Despite an increasing global focus on STEM, there are many fulfilling and diverse career opportunities available in the humanities at all career levels. The humanities infrastructure needs to be widened and strengthened to support the emergence of younger and new practitioners as well as the work of longstanding contributors to the field. Possibility models show different paths to career success. These need to be identified and lifted up for others. Learning networks, like the ones PA Humanities builds for its grantees to share strategies, can serve as models to reach practitioners in locations where networks need additional support. Partnerships can be built with cultural and educational institutions to provide workshops and professional development.

- **Boost community engagement and volunteer opportunities** through training, mentorship, and public awareness campaigns that cultivate an interest in the humanities. We learned that generational and demographic shifts are adversely affecting the volunteer support pipeline, and that new strategies of recruiting and supporting volunteers are needed – if it's to serve on a board, train as a museum docent, or help paint a community mural. There must be more accessible and rewarding pathways for those looking to engage with their communities that can motivate participation and foster a deeper sense of fulfillment. This could be achieved through a range of opportunities and incentives, including incorporating new technologies, paying volunteers, and raising public awareness of volunteer opportunities and benefits.

- **Broaden the spectrum of resources available** for applied humanities activity to fuel growth and innovation across the field. We need to embrace a more holistic view that puts people first, investing in human capital in a way that builds capacity and collaborative energy. Dedicated funding, collaborative networks, and trust-based investments offer promising alternatives to the status quo. It is not just about increasing the financial investment in the humanities; it's about enriching the field with a diverse array of technical, social, and cultural resources. Funders, policymakers, universities, and community leaders can co-create a more vibrant, inclusive and resilient ecosystem for the humanities to thrive.

- **Engage in research that lifts up the voices of practitioners,** using emergent processes like this one, that open us up to a discovery process to learn something different, and learn it differently. These methods generate different, authentic results that build community and learning. The Discovery Project's focus group on Latinx experiences in Reading, conducted entirely in Spanish with local facilitators, offered practitioners a more comfortable and authentic space to share their stories and perspectives more deeply without barriers. As researchers, grantmakers, and thought leaders we have to let go and work with others to learn the importance of cultural practice in communities, and do this with rigor and intention.

TRANSFORMATIVE DISCOVERIES *and* EMERGING ISSUES

Our findings and discovery process have been transformative because we put people first. Participants in the PA Humanities Discovery Project are helping us re-envision the way we view, value, practice, and research the humanities in Pennsylvania. We know from project participants that the humanities are a calling for everyone who practices them. Humanities are all around us and are the connective fabric of our lives and communities. They are dynamic tools for problem-solving, wellness, and community change. They educate and support our youth. They help us navigate change. They create spaces of belonging and connection when we are polarized. They are acts of social justice that lift untold stories and help us envision a future where everyone may be seen, heard, and have influence.

Our learning shows there is still much to be done to reframe and sustain the humanities, so that the lived experience of BIPOC practitioners and all the social and creative capital in communities are recognized and lifted as catalysts and pathways for growth and positive change. Together, we need to sustain and grow the field with passionate practitioners, volunteers, advocates, and supporters from different walks of life. One listening session participant encouraged us: "I think redefining humanities as a human right has the potential to breed conversation...it's a bold statement."

How do the following transformative discoveries and emerging issues show up in your work and in your communities? What's your call to action for the humanities?

Humanities Power Communities & Healing

At the heart of every community lies the humanities, sustaining vital local initiatives, creating educational opportunities, and building relationships. Humanities fosters community bonds and shared experiences. Our research found that humanities encompasses a broad range of activities that power communities and healing, from Chinese calligraphy and chess, to gun violence, LGBTQIA+ experience, immigration, environmentalism and health and wellness. Practitioners work on issues of early literacy, storytelling, local history and more. These activities connect individuals into a tapestry of community through the humanities. The research shows that humanities are all around us, can be practiced by anyone, and often fly under the radar because they are prevalent and fully integrated into the fabric of life. One participant explained it by saying, "I want to make it easy for people to live whole, healthy lives here, and I just really enjoy bringing people together."

It's a missed opportunity if you're not really talking about this as collective community healing."

It is vital to recognize the contributions made to communities by the humanities, as these activities enrich the experiences of so many participants. The social capital made possible by humanities practice connects people and place, fosters relationships and sets the ground for social justice, equity, and healing. When a diversity of voices are heard, bridges are built across challenging social and political divisions. As one listening session participant reflected after hearing these findings: "It's a missed opportunity if you're not really talking about this as collective community healing." Words like "belonging," "healing," and "community" are "important words, particularly when you are amplifying the voices of underrepresented groups."

Envisioning the Future

The humanities play an important role in engaging, educating, and supporting youth. As one research participant said, "There's that saying: if you don't know where you came from you don't know where you are going." Our research finds that humanities activity fills a void in secondary schools, creates safe havens, and fosters both people- and career-focused skill-building. Another practitioner observed that humanities "stretches people's imaginations and comfort zones, shows them the possibilities of what can be done." Humanities practitioners support young people in identifying and pursuing their goals and in transforming narratives about themselves and their prospects. Learning networks can offer opportunities to share strategies across disparate locations.

Tools for Change

Humanities is a dynamic tool for societal advancement, wellness, and community change. This work is eclectic; humanities practitioners participate in the process of transformation through the sheer number and variety of activities they offer. The research shows that 33% of respondents offer daily activities while another 23% offer weekly activities. That is an astounding level of activity, and practitioners are not just doing one thing. They are engaged in multiple streams of activity, such as working at a library that doubles as a craft center, or operating as a solo business entrepreneur producing a podcast and leading organized tours. This volume and variety of work advances community life and diversifies opportunities for community engagement and enrichment.

The work of transformation speaks to the way the humanities fosters capabilities among its practitioners and participants; capabilities are the ways of being and doing that make a meaningful life possible. The research shows that practitioners see the humanities as fundamental human entitlements, and that there is a considerable amount at stake in the work. As one said, "My work brings a sense of healing, peace, and uplift. I want to bring people empathetic views and hopefully positive experiences." They believe the work is transformative to the humanity of all the people involved, and transcends any dichotomy of intrinsic or extrinsic benefit (see section V for more on the capabilities approach).

Social Justice and Equity

Humanities programs are acts of social justice and promote greater equity. In our research, practitioners described efforts to lift up and preserve untold and unacknowledged histories, to connect people through conversation, and to build people's capacity to take action on issues they care deeply about. As one practitioner observed:

> This work is important to me because I believe that people possess the power to transform their lives if given the proper tools, support and illumination around how systems are designed to exacerbate problems across generations. However, when a structurally marginalized group is empowered to take the reins of their economic destiny, they can circumvent the pitfalls of the system and set a more virtuous cycle in place.

Humanities practitioners see themselves as social justice advocates, addressing inequity and empowering positive change for individuals and communities. Another participant noted, "Our culture imposes binaries at every turn, but our lives are nuanced and complex. Telling our own stories, and hearing the stories of others, helps us resist the reductive and homogenous perspectives that are pushed on us. Many of the people I work with love to write as a way of expressing their inner lives and coming to terms with what has happened to them."

"

I see preservation in itself as a mechanism of social justice, albeit somewhat indirect. By selecting the items and the histories we are going to preserve, we are responsible for determining what future generations will be able to learn about and from."

Identity and Purpose

Humanities practitioners view their work not just as a career, but as deeply personal and integral to their identity. Many are not paid for this work, and do it as a way of contributing to community or family ties. In our research, practitioners focused on community history as a way of recognizing the contributions of the past and looking to a shared future. This conversation explored identity and purpose by recognizing the value of local history, shared histories, ethnic histories, industrial and economic histories; these were raised consistently by our Discovery Project participants.

This work is a calling. One participant said:

> I think most of the reaction I get when I talk about working on the humanities is like 'Oh, how nice that you found a job in that" and "How nice you kind of have the privilege of having a job in recreation and leisure and entertainment" and I think it is seen more as an accessory to kind of the fundamental work of the world, as opposed to the core creativity that will allow us to move into the next phase of the world.

People who work in the humanities find personal value and outlets for self-expression in their practice. They find it empowering for themselves and for the populations they serve. Many practitioners have been doing this work for a long time; 41% have been doing it for more than 15 years, and another 17% have been doing it for more than 10 years. Through this work, they achieve a sense of identity and purpose.

"

This work is important to me because I believe that people possess the power to transform their lives if given the proper tools…"

Resiliency & Adaptation

The humanities field, particularly in Pennsylvania, has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges and needs support, but it is resilient and continues to adapt. One way to navigate change is collectively. In the research, we learned of a roundtable organization in Lackawanna County that brought together practitioners monthly for breakfast, to come to the table and share information, and find ways to collaborate. This group met for years, but has fallen out of regular meetings. Participants in the Scranton focus group longed for a group like this to return to active meetings. This kind of regular community convening is a low-cost, low-barrier means to collectively problem solve and address the challenges that arise, as well as to celebrate and share successes.

Successfully navigating change leads to community success, another theme that emerged in the research. As one survey participant stated, "There is too much 'tearing down' going on in the world. We need more 'building up.'" The building of intentional, resilient, and sustainable communities was a goal of practitioners in a world marked by change.

People across Pennsylvania use the humanities to address important questions about culture, values, history, social justice, equity, and health and wellness. They work together to decide what kind of community they want to build, to address challenges, and to take care of one another. Our research showed that humanities activity fosters dialogue and action to address them.

Diversity, Representation, and Recognition

There is a need in the humanities for broader representation, especially of underrepresented groups. There is also a need for greater acknowledgment of practitioners' contributions. In our research, the word "community" came up frequently in the description of what humanities practitioners do – they are providing safe, judgment-free spaces in which people can fully embrace their sense of self and expand their horizons. These spaces allow for increased representation and recognition in venues across the Commonwealth.

One respondent talked about the themes of love and empathy with an emphasis on social justice through the intersection of history and art. Through interpretation and retelling of community stories, new narrative pathways are formed and new traditions created. These can serve the goals of increased diversity, representation, and recognition. Another said, "I learn so much from hearing and reading other people's stories. It sounds corny, but it's true. Nothing has radicalized me more."

Humanities practitioners work in a profession that has prioritized educational attainment or professional degrees over lived and field experience. Yet, BIPOC practitioners report that their initiation into the humanities comes primarily through community involvement and creative activities. Hearing our findings, one listening session participant also called out the need to elevate LGBTQIA+ participation: "There's so much need for trans stories and trans voices to be out there right now." The humanities profession must adapt, developing systems and support structures for career guidance and mentorship within the practitioner community, highlighting the importance of experienced practitioners serving as 'possibility models' for emerging professionals.

Redefining Value and Resources

The humanities have a branding problem, where the value of the work has been disassociated from the meaning that the term 'humanities' evokes. In our research, practitioners reported they mostly use the term 'humanities' when talking to funders, applying for grants, or talking about human rights or humanism. The term is used more in educational and formal settings than in informal or public settings, yet our research shows that in all settings, the underlying purpose of the humanities is to support people. As one participant said, "Everything I do in the classroom is about the humanities...what makes us human and how we connect to other humans in the world." Putting people first in the humanities can reconnect the term with participatory, connected experiences that emphasize values and benefits like self-expression, joy, empathy, the ability to connect with others, and the use of those skills to build resistance against oppression.

Likewise, our research shows the importance of building networks of practice and diversifying resources to support humanities activity. Many humanities programs are free to the public and address unmet needs of people and communities. Humanities programs occur at the intersection of multiple social causes such as health and wellness, youth development, and community

development. Resources that support these causes can also support humanities activity. Yet it is often difficult and arduous to fund humanities activity. One listening session participant exclaimed: "Oh my gosh, it's so much work for like a $1,000 grant. I almost feel like writing a check out on my checking account." Another listening session participant declared: "If we don't value it, then we don't invest in it." Beyond funding, networks of practice among humanities practitioners, humanities organizations, and their community partners can be strengthened to help leverage local assets, human capital, and shared community resources.

Advocacy Amidst Persistent Challenges

Humanities practitioners and organizations are persistent. Our research shows the necessity of building a case for support in a context where the humanities is sometimes seen as being in decline relative to other fields, like STEM. Practitioners observed that the humanities are valued by policymakers more for their extrinsic impacts than their intrinsic ones, creating dissonance between these two groups. One practitioner described it this way:

> On the other hand, oftentimes, we as artists don't know how to explain in words what we do so that people in positions of power understand. Because when they think of community development, they think of buildings, streets, and infrastructure, but here we are developing community now, but they don't think like that. Therefore, we need to introduce ourselves using words, in ways they understand.

Recent news articles in national media highlight the decline of the humanities in higher education. Younger and non-white practitioners report a lack of exposure to the humanities as a viable career opportunity, and a perceived lack of value of the humanities profession among the general public.

"

It would be easier to ask what doesn't motivate me to do this work. This is the work; what gets me up in the morning and inspires me."

Reframing the value of the humanities using a capabilities approach[43] allows us to place human flourishing and happiness at the center, and to claim both the intrinsic and extrinsic impacts of the humanities as essential elements of thriving individuals and communities. Our research shows that the humanities in Pennsylvania enrich people's lives in multiple ways. These include helping people understand different cultures and work together happily and peacefully, addressing cycles of intergenerational trauma, transforming narratives, opening doors for others without money or privilege, connecting people to things that matter to them, fostering creative expressions, and creating safe spaces for dialogue. As one practitioner said, "My love of this place, this land and all its living beings, is the main motivation. I also have hope that some of the stories we tell will make a difference for the future health of this place."

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[43] The capabilities approach is a belief that there are certain qualities of life that are fundamental to human flourishing and need to be fostered among all people in order to allow them to live a good life. Please see section v for more information.

Research like the PA Humanities Discovery Project helps illuminate why this work is important, and how deeply valued it is by its practitioners. Our unique methodology of centering practitioners' voices and experiences enabled us to discover the power of the humanities in human flourishing and how it can be redefined in their terms to reimagine its future.

Finally, a listening session participant, who was heartened by a sense of common purpose and connection to other humanities practitioners through this research: "I thought it was just me and a couple other people, but it's a very sizable chunk of people who are doing this for love, you know, or for commitment. And we need to find more ways to pull resources to support them because it is seemingly a sizable chunk of the community and the creators."

JOIN *the* MOVEMENT

The findings from the PA Humanities Discovery Project not only illuminate the profound impact of the humanities in Pennsylvania but also celebrate the diverse "bouquet" of people and practices that enrich our everyday lives. At PA Humanities, our commitment to learning and co-creating through research and conversation has been further strengthened by undertaking this deep process of discovery. With this fuller understanding of our diverse, interdependent humanities landscape, we are more committed than ever to our community-based work and advocating for the humanities and its practitioners.

It was encouraging to hear people's feelings about this work [during the Listening Sessions]. Someone said, 'I can't not do humanities.' ...that was cool because this is tough and we need community to do this work."

This research provides PA Humanities, and other advocates, with a solid foundation for explaining how the humanities are essential for creating meaningful change, addressing social challenges, and promoting human flourishing.

We invite you to join the movement and participate in this important conversation about reframing the humanities. Visit DiscoveryProject.info or PAHumanities.org to connect with us and learn more about this research. Let us continue to share, learn, and grow, building a future where everyone can thrive.

VII. Acknowledgments

What you pay attention to grows.”

-adrienne maree brown

We paid attention to practitioners and experienced advisors to build our learnings and a community together. We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to the PA Humanities Discovery Project. This work would not have been possible without the collective effort and support of numerous individuals and organizations.

Special Thanks

We wish to thank the many practitioners who participated in our surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions. Your stories and insights were invaluable to this research. Your dedication to enriching our communities through the humanities is the foundation of this project.

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VIII. Appendix: *PA Humanities Discovery Project Survey Questions*

Q1.1 Welcome to the PA Humanities Discovery Project!

Thank you for participating in this first-ever effort by PA Humanities and Drexel University to tell the story of the humanities across Pennsylvania. Through the PA Humanities Discovery Project you're joining the movement to map, network, and celebrate this wonderfully rich landscape and build a more inclusive and connected community of people enriching Pennsylvania's cultural and civic life.

We appreciate everything you do, which has been especially critical during the pandemic, keeping people connected and inspired, while encouraging resilience and recovery. Your participation in this survey will help us highlight your important work and advocate for the interests of the state's cultural community. Findings will be released by PA Humanities in 2023.

THANK YOU again for contributing to this project -- and for all you do to make Pennsylvania such a special place!

LAURIE ZIERER, *Executive Director of PA Humanities*
JASON SCHUPBACH, *Dean of the Westphal College of Media Arts and Design at Drexel University*

Q1.2 About the PA Humanities Discovery Project

This short survey is meant to gather information about your experiences with the humanities across Pennsylvania. PA Humanities and Drexel University plan to use this insight to create community and better advocate for the humanities with policymakers, funders, and the general public. The survey asks about your experience in this area. It should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Your name and any identifying information will be limited to the research team. We will not publish your name or identifying details in any reports or publications. Though there is always a risk of breach of confidentiality, we believe this risk to be minimal due to the data security measures we have put in place. The data gathered from your responses will be used to develop the PA Humanities Discovery Project, as well as for scholarly purposes, such as publications. Findings will also be shared back with you.

Ten survey participants will be selected in a random drawing to receive a gift basket or $50 gift card from a local Pennsylvania company such as Miller's Bakery in Lancaster or Prantl's Bakery in Pittsburgh. If selected, we will contact you via email to arrange for delivery by mail. The potential risks associated with this study are minimal. If at any time you are not comfortable answering a question, you may skip it or withdraw from the study. There are no costs to you for participating in this survey. No participants will be forcefully removed from the study.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about this research, please contact Dr. Andrew Zitcer (awz25@drexel.edu).

Please let us know if you agree to take the survey below. Thank you for your time. We look forward to your responses.

○ Yes (I agree to take the survey). Please provide your name and email in the box below.

   These will be kept separate from the survey data and used only to conduct the gift card drawing and to share the survey findings with you. (1)

○ No (I do not agree to take the survey) (2)

Q2.1 This section asks you to describe the type of humanities work that you do with your community. PA Humanities describes this as, "Storytelling, history, creativity, and conversations are some of the tools that the humanities provide everyday people to document their culture, build their education, and move forward in shaping their homes. Through the humanities, we come to understand, support, and celebrate the human experience."

Q59 Looking at the description of humanities above, please tell us about your work with communities. What you do and how you do it? (examples: I plan community events or celebrations; I run a community garden; I use theater to explore community history; I use storytelling to heal trauma; I teach people how to make things)

Q3.8 Who attends or participates in your activities? Please describe by age (ex: adults, youth, seniors), identity (ex: race, ethnicity, gender, ability), and other important characteristics.

Q79 Please tell us about any community members who help plan your activities.

Q3.2 How do you describe your work to others?

Q2.6 Please tell us about the social, cultural, or community themes you explore in your work. (examples: history, housing, youth development, health and wellness, social justice, migration, land and water, community revitalization)

Q2.8 Do you use the term "humanities" when describing your projects or programs?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Sometimes (3)

Q2.9 In what situations do you use the term "humanities" when describing your projects or programs?

Q2.10 What other words do you use to describe your projects or programs?

Q3.1 This section asks where your activities occur.

Q3.4 In what type(s) of space or places do you conduct your work? Please choose all that apply

○ Our own facility(ies) (1)

○ Religious facility (churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, etc.) (2)

○ Community or recreation center (3)

○ Park/farm/community garden (4)

○ Pre-school or child-care facility (5)

○ School (K-12) (6)

○ College or university (8)

○ Downtown/main street (18)

○ Museum/gallery (9)

○ Theater or Performing arts venue (10)

○ Library (public or academic) (11)

○ Facility for unhoused, homeless shelter (13)

○ Senior citizen center, retirement or nursing home (14)

○ Prison, jail, or detention center (15)

○ Personal or family residences (16)

○ Online (17)

○ Other (please describe) (12)

Q3.7 Which Pennsylvania county(ies) do you work in? Please choose all that apply (press "Command" on Mac or "Control" on PC to select multiple counties)

Q4.1 This section asks how long you have been doing this work, why you do it, and how your work is supported by others.

Q4.2 How long have you been doing this kind of work?

○ Less than 1 year (1)

○ 1 to 5 years (2)

○ 5 to 10 years (3)

○ 10 to 15 years (4)

○ More than 15 years (5)

Q72 How many hours a week do you spend on this kind of work?

○ 1-5 hours (1)

○ 6-10 hours (2)

○ 11-20 hours (3)

○ 21-40 hours (4)

○ More than 40 hours (5)

Q4.3 What motivates you to do this work? Why is it important to you?

Q4.4 Why is your work important to others? What benefits does it bring to people, culture, and communities?

Q88 How did you gain your experience for your humanities work in the community?

Q4.5 How frequently do you offer activities?

○ Daily or multiple days per week (1)

○ Weekly (2)

○ Monthly (3)

○ Seasonally (4)

○ Annually (5)

Q4.6 How often are you paid for this kind of work?

○ Always (1)

○ Most of the time (2)

○ About half the time (3)

○ Sometimes (4)

○ Never (5)

Q4.7 How are the costs of your projects or programs usually funded or financially supported? Please choose all that apply

○ I cover all of the costs (1)

○ friends and family contribute money to support my work (2)

○ grant funding pays for it (8)

○ a group, club, or organization pays for it (3)

○ attendance or participation fees pay for the costs (4)

○ event-related sales (food, t-shirts, etc.) pay for the costs (5)

○ there are no costs (example: book club) (7)

○ other (please describe) (6)

Q4.9 On a scale of 1 (it's very easy) to 5 (it's very hard) how hard is it for you to get the resources you need to do this work?

Q84 Please tell us more about getting resources to do your work.

Q89 This section asks about your experience of your work during the pandemic and as your communities reopen.

Q90 How has your work and its relevance changed in the last three years?

Q91 Within the last year, have you worked in partnership with any of the following types of organizations or groups? Please choose all that apply. For each one you choose, let us know if this is an existing or new relationship.

	Existing Relationship	New Relationship
Pre-school	○	○
K-8 school	○	○
High school	○	○
College/university	○	○
Day care/after-school care	○	○
Community or recreation center	○	○
Detention center/prison	○	○
Farmer's market or community garden	○	○
Food pantry/food assistance site	○	○
Homeless shelter/emergency housing	○	○
Hospital/clinic/health facility	○	○
Libraries	○	○
Park(s)	○	○
Place(s) of worship	○	○
Senior center/residence	○	○
Places of work or business	○	○
Public square or plaza	○	○
Other (please specify)	○	○

_____

Q5.1 This section asks you about your connections to other people, groups, and organizations who you work with, who do similar work, and/or who support your work. We will use this information to map connections across the state.

Q5.2 Who else do you know (people, groups, and organizations) who does this kind of work?

Q87 This question asks you to tell us about the top five people or groups you work with (including any clubs or community organizations). Please tell us the name of each person or group. Then, choose the option that best corresponds to the strength of your working relationship with them: *Close Relationship* - I am a frequent collaborator with them. *Collegial Relationship* - I know them and they know me; we share information and cross-promote each other's work. *Emerging Relationship* - I am aware of them and may want to be more closely involved. They may be aware of my work.

	Type of Collaborator (Please choose Individual or Group)	Name of Collaborator Name of Individual or Group	Strength of Relationship		
			Close	Collegial	Emerging
Collaborator 1	⌄	_____	○	○	○
Collaborator 2	⌄	_____	○	○	○
Collaborator 3	⌄	_____	○	○	○
Collaborator 4	⌄	_____	○	○	○
Collaborator 5	⌄	_____	○	○	○

Q85 Is there anyone else we should contact to take this survey?

○ No (1)

○ Yes (please provide name(s) and email(s); they will only be used for this purpose) (2)

Q6.1 This section asks you to identify yourself by age, ZIP Code, gender, and race. This information will not be used to identify any single individuals in the survey report. It will be used to generally describe who participated in the survey.

Q64 What is your age?

○ 18-24 years old (1)

○ 25-34 years old (2)

○ 35-44 years old (3)

○ 45-54 years old (4)

○ 55-64 years old (5)

○ 64-75 years old (6)

○ 75 or older (7)

Q6.3 What is your US Zip Code?

Q6.7 Are you currently serving in or a veteran of the armed forces?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ I prefer not to answer (3)

Q65 Do you identify as Latino/a/x/Hispanic?

○ No, not Latino/a/x/Hispanic (1)

○ Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano (2)

○ Yes, Puerto Rican (3)

○ Yes, Cuban (4)

○ Yes, please describe (5) _____

○ Choose not to self-identify (6)

Q67 What is your racial identity? Please choose all that apply

○ American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native (1)

○ Black or African American (3)

○ East Asian (4)

○ Southwest Asian and North Afrikan (5)

○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (6)

○ South Asian (7)

○ Southeast Asian (8)

○ White (9)

○ Choose not to self-identify (10)

○ Other races not listed (please specify) (11) _____

Q6.5 Do you identify as a person with one or more disabilities?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Choose not to self-identify (3)

Q6.10 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

○ Some high school or less (1)

○ High school diploma or GED (2)

○ Some college, but no degree (3)

○ Associates or technical degree (4)

○ Bachelor's degree (5)

○ Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS etc.) (6)

○ Prefer not to say (7)

Q6.11 Please identify your primary field(s) of study (examples: history, dance, nursing, education, engineering, masonry, automotive repair)

○ Some college, but no degree (1) _____

○ Associates or technical degree(s) (2) _____

○ Bachelor's degree(s) (3) _____

○ Graduate or professional degree(s) (if applicable) (4) _____

Q69 Do you consider yourself a first-generation college graduate?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Choose not to self-identify (3)

Q70 What best describes your gender identity?

○ Man (1)

○ Woman (7)

○ Trans man (8)

○ Trans woman (9)

○ Agender (10)

○ Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming (11)

○ Non-binary (12)

○ Third gender (13)

○ Two-Spirit (14)

○ I prefer to self-describe with a term not listed here (please specify) (15) _____

○ Choose not to self-identify (16)

Q6.6 What best describes your sexual orientation?

○ Asexual (1)

○ Bisexual (4)

○ Gay or lesbian (5)

○ Heterosexual or straight (6)

○ Pansexual (7)

○ Queer (8)

○ I prefer to self-describe with a term not listed here (please specify) (9) _____

○ Choose not to self-identify (10)

Q6.12 What best describes your employment status over the last three months? Please choose all that apply

○ Working full-time (1)

○ Working part-time (2)

○ Working as a consultant or independent contractor (3)

○ Unemployed and looking for work (4)

○ A stay-at-home caregiver (5)

○ Student (6)

○ Retired (7)

○ Other (please describe) (8) _____

Q73 Are you willing to be contacted to be part of a focus group to learn more about your work in communities?

○ Yes (please provide a name and email address to reach you) (1) _____

○ No (2)

Q82 Would you like to sign up to receive the PA Humanities newsletter (bi-monthly)?

○ Yes (please provide a first name, last name and email address to reach you) (1) _____

○ No (2)

Q7.1 Thank you for your participation! The PA Humanities Discovery Project is a joint effort of PA Humanities and Drexel University. Funding comes from the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

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