

Let's Talk About It Program FAQ

1. What is Let's Talk About It Program?

The Let's Talk About It library discussion program was created to promote reading and discussion program development in America's public libraries.

The American Library Association originally launched Let's Talk About It with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. In North Carolina, this program is sponsored by the North Carolina Humanities Council and the NC Center for the Book. The NC Center for the Book is a program of the North Carolina Humanities Council. The NC Center for the Book is an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and receives support from the State Library of North Carolina.

The North Carolina Humanities Council curates the LTAI catalog and administers the program. This includes; managing the library application process to host a series, recruiting and organizing a scholar cohort to serve as facilitators, confirming scholars to facilitate each program session, and assessing the impact of the program through the collection of surveys and final reports from all parties. The LTAI series library is housed at the State Library of North Carolina who is a key partner in the NC Center for the Book's programs.

2. What are the objectives of the program?

The objectives of the program are for participants to have exposure to new ideas and perspectives. With the support of a humanities scholar, participants discuss thematically curated film and literature pieces which provide opportunities to consider and share their own life experiences to build community.

3. How do I get started?

When applying to host a series it is important to have the support of the library staff, its board, and active library advocacy groups like Friends of the Library. From these sources, we advise creating a small planning group of five or six people. This group will serve as promoters for the program and will also provide or seek additional financial support.

The librarian or the project director should contact the North Carolina Humanities Council's Program Coordinator, Melissa Giblin at mgiblin@nchumanities.org or (704) 687-1526 for any questions when planning and applying for a series. A full catalog of the available Let's Talk About It series are available [here](#).

Please consider the following tips when applying to host a series:

- There are over twenty Let's Talk About It series offered, but because of a limited number of books, most of the series can only run in two libraries at the same time.
- Series are available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- ***Please be aware of application deadlines for the three cycles*** offered annually. The summer cycle deadline is in March, the fall cycle deadline is in June, and the winter-spring cycle deadline is in October. [Please consult our webpage for the most current cycle deadline information.](#)
- Employ your planning committee to determine which series will have the greatest appeal to the people in your community. Often libraries suggest 2-3 series and engage the community to vote on the series in which they would like to request.

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4. How do I apply?

The North Carolina Humanities Council offers three annual cycles of Let's Talk About It programs; summer, fall, and winter-spring. Summer series typically take place from May-August. Fall series typically take place from September-November; and winter-spring series typically take place from January-May. If planning for a fall series some mountain communities may want to start in August to avoid bad weather.

You can complete the Let's Talk About It grant application process entirely online. Please follow the steps below when applying for a Let's Talk About It Grant:

1. Please review this Project Director's Guide.
2. Please review the available themes in our [series choices](#) and select your first and second choice series.
3. The Council has an online application system! Please watch this [video tutorial](#) on how to apply using our online application system or download [these written instructions](#).
4. Complete the [online application](#) and submit it by the respective cycle deadline listed above.

The Council provides one-on-one phone consultations to discuss the program in-depth with new and first time applicants. Please click [here](#) to schedule your phone consultation today!

5. Are there financial obligations for my library?

When libraries apply to the North Carolina Humanities Council to host a series they can request grant funds of up to \$1,000.00. This grant is used to cover the \$200.00 honorarium paid to each of the scholars to lead sessions.

Libraries are *not required* to request funds when they apply to host a series, and some libraries have independent funds which they use to cover the scholars' honoraria. All grants from the Council require a 2-to-1 match of funds awarded (i.e. a \$2,000 match for LTAI) which our grantees often far exceed once they account for all of the efforts they undertake to make this program a success. This match can be made through both cash and in-kind sources:

- *Example of an in-kind match:* An organization makes an in-kind match when providing facility space, materials or equipment, and administrative or volunteer time planning the program.
- *Example of a cash match:* An organization makes a cash match when paying for publicity, printing, refreshments, and any scholar travel, meals or lodging.

The host library pays all travel expenses of the scholar. We highly recommend that Libraries budget about \$500.00 toward covering scholar travel, meals, and lodging although the expenses vary based on the scholar's location. Every attempt is made to find scholars who will not need overnight accommodations, but this is not always possible.

The host library also provides venue space for the sessions or partners with another community organization to provide space for the sessions. The host library also publicizes the event in accordance with the North Carolina Humanities Council's publicity [guidelines](#), and recruits participants for the program.

Libraries should also include expenses such as series administration time (planning, set up, breakdown, coordination with scholars, etc), publicity, printing, venue space, shipping, and refreshments when creating their Let's Talk About It budgets. In many cases, the Friends of the Library or other support organizations are sources of additional funding.

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There is no charge for the books or films, however the host library is responsible for the shipping of the books back to the State Library or to another library, as directed. There is no charge to the participants.

6. Are there other obligations for my library?

Reporting: The project director is responsible for completing all electronic forms and reports, which include the application, award agreement, pre-series checklist, and the final report.

Coordinating & Communicating with Assigned Scholars: The host library has a key role with scholars. While the Council schedules individual scholars for all sessions, **the library is responsible for coordinating travel logistics with each scholar via an MOU, and communicating preparation details about the group** (i.e. the group's preferred format, special interests, etc) **with the scholar in advance**. The project director is responsible for completing evaluations of each scholar that facilitated a discussion during the series on the final report.

7. How are the books provided?

The North Carolina Humanities Council asks each library to estimate the number of expected participants on the Let's Talk About It program application to ensure that there will be copies available for your library. Books and films are provided by the North Carolina State Library. Included in a library's award packet is a "**Materials Request Form**" which must be completed and sent to the State Library coordinator listed on the form.

Submit the materials request form to the State Library a month prior to the first session to ensure adequate processing and shipping time. Once libraries receive the books they can distribute the first title to the participants as they sign up for the program. After the first session, participants return the first book and receive the second book for the next session. We recommend that libraries not give out all five books at the beginning of the series in the event that some participants drop out.

8. How long does a series last?

There are usually five sessions in each Let's Talk About It book series and six in film series. When scheduling sessions for a book series please remember to allow sufficient time for participants to read the book and prepare for each session.

Typically, in a book series a session takes place every two weeks, making the series run a total of nine weeks. Film series can be offered on a weekly basis. Please note that these are recommended series timelines and you must select a format which will work for your particular patrons.

9. Where and when should the program be held?

The Let's Talk About It program is offered through public libraries, and it is expected that the sessions will be held on site. If a library does not have sufficient space to accommodate the program then we recommend finding an alternative public space or partnering with another community organization to host the series.

This program seeks to engage communities in public discussion and the spaces must be accessible to anyone who wishes to attend. Let's Talk About It series typically run as a **1 ½ to 2 hour** weekday evening program; however, some programs are successfully held on Sunday afternoons (formatting should reflect the interest and availability of your specific patrons).

10. What are the program format options?

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The North Carolina Humanities Council scholars and librarians/project directors should communicate and meet briefly prior to the session to review the discussion questions, share tips for discussion facilitation, and make any final preparations.

It is expected that scholars develop discussion questions or points for participants and send them to the librarian/project director no later than two weeks prior to his or her session date. The librarian can then distribute these questions to the participants so they can begin to think critically about the text as they read it independently. These questions can also serve as a starting point for discussion.

Following the scholar's introductory presentation about the text there are two basic discussion formats for this program. Program length can range from **1 ½ -2 hours** depending on the format.

Small Group Breakouts – One format for this series includes small group break-out discussions for about thirty minutes with the intention of ensuring that all voices can be heard. The small groups then reconvene and share their comments analysis with the whole group. If the group is large (30+), some participants might not offer comments or ask questions when the whole group is speaking together. By breaking into smaller groups for part of the discussion participants in a large group will have more opportunity (and often greater comfort) to express their opinions on the text. **Please note:** If there are to be small discussion groups then leaders for those groups should be arranged prior to the meeting.

Whole Group Discussion - Many libraries, particularly those with a smaller group, prefer to remain together for the discussion. These whole group discussions can sometimes be dominated by one participant with a strong personality. Both the scholar and project director/librarian should be aware of the group's dynamics and intervene to redirect the conversation when needed so that all participants have an opportunity to share and so the discussion stays on topic.

Examples of Session Structures

Small Group Breakout Format

7:00 PM Introductory Presentation by scholar
 7:45 PM Break & Refreshments
 8:00 PM Small Discussion Group(s)
 8:40 PM Wrap-up (small groups report, final questions and responses between scholar and participants)
 9:00 PM Departure

Whole Group Discussion Format

6:00 PM Introductory Presentation by scholar
 6:30 PM Break and Refreshments
 6:45 PM Group Discussion
 7:45 PM Departure

*Refreshments can be offered at the beginning, middle, or end of the evening.

11. What is the Role of the Scholar?

The scholar is usually a professor or retired faculty of a university or college and has knowledge with the particular text and a background in English or writing. The scholar is both a content expert and discussion facilitator.

The role of the scholar is to:

1. Provide a critical perspective on the materials.

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2. Help participants consider new perspectives and understand a particular theme, culture, history, or experience.
3. Facilitate discussion that creates opportunities for participants to hear a viewpoint other than their own and encourages participants to consider and share experiences from their own life.

The scholar should provide context and academic groundwork for the discussion text while maintaining active group discourse and preventing any one person's perspective to dominate the discussion.

Program evaluation and librarian feedback continually demonstrate that scholars are a critical element in the success of the program. They bring the book to life with insights and background on the author, raising questions and being the catalyst that sparks discussion. The first scholar sets the tone and discusses the general theme of the series. Each succeeding scholar shows how the book fits into the general theme of the series.

If the group decides to remain as one discussion group, then the scholar leads that discussion. Otherwise, if there are small discussion groups, the scholar visits each group and then leads a wrap-up at the end of the evening.

Please Note: Once a library has been notified by the North Carolina Humanities Council that they were approved to host a series, it is the libraries' responsibility to contact their scholars, to arrange scholar travel (contact information will be provided), and convey relevant information on the group.

12. How do project directors recruit participants?

Let's Talk About It scholars often comment that they love to facilitate these discussions because of participants' eagerness and enthusiasm to learn and share. The Let's Talk About It program is designed for adult participants. The age of participants vary, but all have a common interest for reading, are eager for an experience that challenges them and are often seeking a venue in which to share ideas. Ideal participants are adults who enjoy reading, learning, and are open to new and exciting ways of enriching their lives through literature.

Strategic marketing and publicity are key to attracting and sustaining participation in the Let's Talk About It program long-term. Effective mediums are social media, posters, flyers, in-house promotional displays and word of mouth.

Libraries also often advertise their programs through newspaper and radio as well as with local community partner organizations. Libraries should target their active patrons, Friends of the Library group, local book clubs, centers for senior citizens, retirement homes, and teachers. The North Carolina Humanities Council offers a certificate which can be used for Teacher Renewal Credit (final approval must come from individual school districts).

13. What are the reporting requirements?

Once approved there are three electronic forms that are required:

- Award Agreement – Identifies the terms of the program and, if awarded, the grant funding provided by the Council.
- Pre-Series Checklist – this includes your scholar assignments, participant sign-in sheet, cash request form, materials request form, and publicity guidelines.
- Final Report - As with all programs and grants offered by the North Carolina Humanities Council, we require reporting on demographics, finances, in-kind contributions, and program and scholar feedback. The data from these reports are used at both the state and federal levels. These reports are also critical feedback as we design new programs and advocate for legislative and congressional support for public

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humanities programs. We always welcome narratives and quotes from both participants and project directors/librarians.

All electronic reports are assigned via the [Applicant Dashboard](#) to the applicant with their award forms. This report should be updated throughout the series as the project director is required to do an evaluation of each scholar's session.

Please see your [Applicant Dashboard](#) portal for specific due dates for each required electronic form.

14. System for Award Management: As of Oct 1, 2010, recipients of federal grants must comply with sub recipient reporting requirements under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA). No Organization can receive a sub-award unless they provide a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number to the North Carolina Humanities Council and are registered in the System for Award Management (<https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>). There is NO FEE to register at sam.gov.

Please see the [Quickstart Guide for New Grantee Registration here](#) for helpful tips on getting started on registering in the System for Awards Management.

15. What is a DUNS Number?: A DUNS number is a nine-digit number established by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities. This number can be obtained from D&B by telephone (866-705-5711) or through their website <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>