North Carolina humanities

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to connect North Carolinians with cultural experiences that spur dialogue, deepen human connections, and inspire community.

OUR VISION

A North Carolina enriched by the humanities and equipped with empathy, understanding, and respect.

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The humanities connect us to one another, to our history, and to the future we are building together.

A Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

Every community has a story. Every story has the power to deepen understanding, strengthen connections, and shape our future. That is the enduring work of the humanities.

For more than 50 years, **North Carolina Humanities has served as North Carolina's statewide humanities council,** connecting people, organizations, and communities through the transformative power of the humanities. We serve as the bridge between national humanities resources and local communities, ensuring that communities across North Carolina have access to ideas, scholarship, stories, and cultural experiences that enrich civic life and strengthen our shared future.

In 2025, that mission reached communities across nearly every county in North Carolina. Together with our partners, we expanded access to books and lifelong learning, invested in humanities research, supported community-driven grant projects, and brought nationally recognized exhibitions and conversations to communities throughout our state. From launching our inaugural Summer Fellowships to celebrating North Carolina's literary heritage through the North Carolina Center for the Book, every initiative reflected our belief that **the humanities are for everyone, every day.**

What makes North Carolina Humanities distinctive is our ability to connect local communities with statewide leadership and national opportunity. We believe lasting impact begins through partnership. Working alongside libraries, museums, colleges and universities, educators, cultural organizations, government agencies, and community leaders, we help transform local ideas into statewide impact while ensuring that communities across North Carolina benefit from nationally respected humanities resources, programs, and expertise.

Our statewide leadership is strengthened through a network of national and state partnerships that expand opportunities for North Carolinians. As **North Carolina's affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities**, we connect communities across our state with national resources that support public humanities programming, scholarship, and lifelong learning. Through the **North Carolina Center for the Book**, an affiliate of the **Library of Congress** Center for the Book and

Every story has the power to deepen understanding, strengthen connections, and shape our future.

supported in part by the State Library of North Carolina, we celebrate reading, literacy, and our state's rich literary heritage while connecting readers across North Carolina. Our partnership with the Smithsonian Institution brings nationally recognized traveling exhibitions to communities throughout the state, while our collaboration with the Federation of State Humanities Councils connects North Carolina to a nationwide network committed to strengthening communities through the humanities. Together, these partnerships allow us to bring national opportunities home while sharing North Carolina's stories, scholarship, and innovation with audiences across the country.

Leadership also carries responsibility. North Carolina Humanities is committed to thoughtful stewardship of every public and private investment entrusted to us. Guided by a dedicated Board of Trustees and supported by an exceptional professional staff, we work each day to ensure that our resources create lasting value for the people and communities we serve. We measure our success not only by the programs we offer, but also by the relationships we build, the conversations we inspire, and the opportunities we create for North Carolinians to learn from one another.

As you turn these pages, I hope you see more than grants awarded, books distributed, exhibitions presented, or financial results. I hope you see neighbors discovering new perspectives, scholars advancing knowledge, community organizations preserving local history, and people gathering to listen, learn, and engage with one another. These are the moments that strengthen communities and remind us that the humanities are not simply about understanding our past—they help us build a stronger future together.

This report tells the story of what we accomplished during 2025. More importantly, it reflects what is possible when people invest in understanding one another. At a time when thoughtful dialogue, trusted information, and meaningful human connection are more important than ever, the humanities continue to play an essential role in the life of our state.

Thank you for believing in this work and for making it possible. Whether you joined us as a reader, donor, scholar, volunteer, partner, trustee, educator, or advocate, you are part of this story. Together, we are preserving North Carolina's rich heritage, expanding opportunities for lifelong learning, and building stronger communities for generations to come.

With gratitude,



Sherry Paula Watkins
Executive Director

Every Community Has a Story



COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Community Initiatives create opportunities for North Carolina Humanities to partner with organizations and bring high-quality national programs to local communities. These initiatives encourage learning, discussion, and engagement, helping build more informed citizens and stronger communities.

SPARK! PLACES OF INNOVATION

For more than 15 years, North Carolina Humanities has brought Smithsonian Institution exhibitions across North Carolina to start dialogue, facilitate connections, open doors to local history, and build a sense of community spirit.

Spark! Places of Innovation explores the unique combination of places, people, and circumstances that spark innovation and invention in rural communities. Inspired by an exhibition by the National Museum of American History, the exhibition features stories gathered from diverse communities across the nation. NC Humanities selected six communities to host *Spark!* for approximately six weeks at no cost. With program support and grant funding available from NC Humanities, each community created public programs, events, companion exhibits, and resources that enhanced themes from the exhibit.

This tour was part of the Museum on Main Street (MoMS) program, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), state humanities councils across the nation, including North Carolina Humanities, and local host organizations.

2025-2026 Spark! Places of Innovation Locations

Good Stewards of Rockingham
MAYODAN

Beaufort Branch Library
BEAUFORT

Iredell Museums
STATESVILLE

May Memorial Library
BURLINGTON

Madison County Arts Council
MARSHALL

Person County Museum of History
ROXBORO



Smithsonian

Museum on Main Street Grants

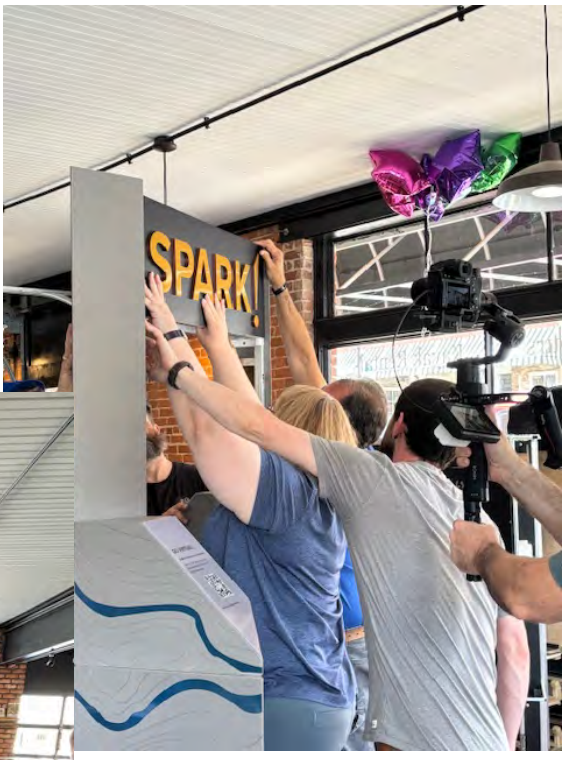
Grants of up to $5,000 support local companion exhibitions and exhibition-related programming.

Carteret County Friends of the Library
Beaufort
Award: $1,000

Good Stewards of Rockingham
Mayodan
Award: $5,000

Iredell Museums
Statesville
Award: $5,000

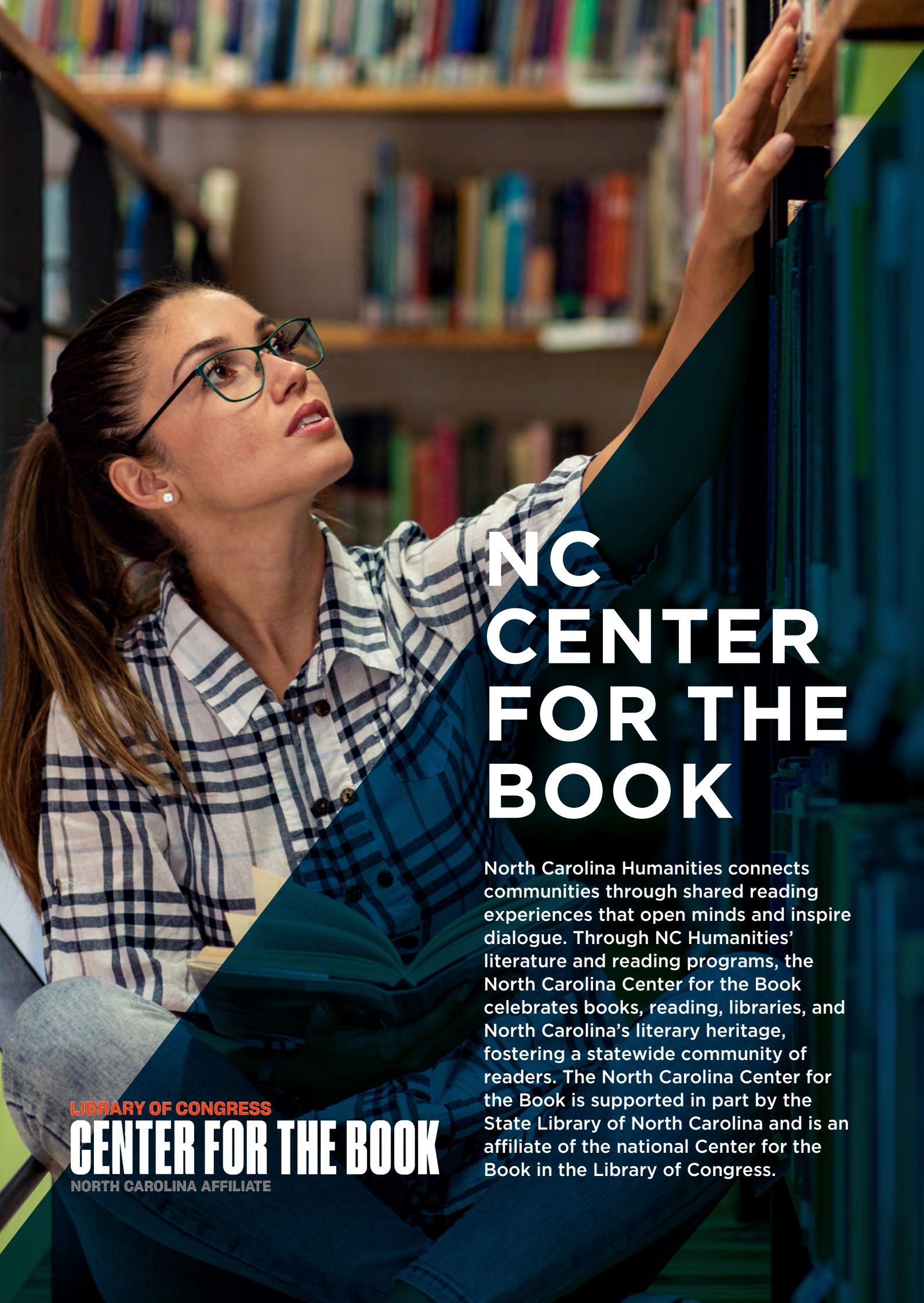
Person County Museum of History
Roxboro
Award: $5,000





Reading
opens minds.

Shared
stories
strengthen
communities.



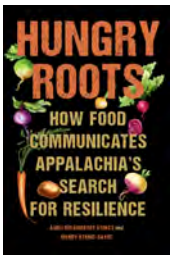
NC CENTER FOR THE BOOK

North Carolina Humanities connects communities through shared reading experiences that open minds and inspire dialogue. Through NC Humanities' literature and reading programs, the North Carolina Center for the Book celebrates books, reading, libraries, and North Carolina's literary heritage, fostering a statewide community of readers. The North Carolina Center for the Book is supported in part by the State Library of North Carolina and is an affiliate of the national Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
CENTER FOR THE BOOK
NORTH CAROLINA AFFILIATE











North Carolina Reads

North Carolina Reads is North Carolina Humanities' award-winning, virtual, statewide book club. North Carolina Reads annually features five books that explore the history and culture of North Carolina. The people, places, and events in the books offer an opportunity to reflect on how people can contribute to shaping their communities.



NC Humanities hosted virtual book club discussion events where participants heard from book authors and topic experts. Libraries, community groups, and individuals across North Carolina were encouraged to read along, attend virtual discussions, and host local book programs that foster conversation, connection, and community. Reading strengthens critical-thinking skills, expands vocabulary, supports well-being, and creates opportunities to explore different perspectives.



To ensure broader access to books and increase participation in North Carolina Reads book club discussions, NC Humanities provided 4,000 free books and reading resources in North Carolina Reads Book Boxes to North Carolina community groups and individual readers throughout the state. Readers keep their books after the series concludes, extending opportunities for literacy, learning, and conversations about North Carolina stories.

Thank you to our North Carolina Reads 2025 sponsor, McGuireWoods.

FEBRUARY
The American Queen by Vanessa Miller

MARCH
On the Swamp: Fighting for Indigenous Environmental Justice by Ryan E. Emanuel

APRIL
Hungry Roots: How Food Communicates Appalachia's Search for Resilience by Ashli Quesinberry Stokes and Wendy Atkins-Sayre

MAY
The Girls We Sent Away by Megan Church

JUNE
Doc Watson: A Life in Music by Eddie Huffman

North Carolina Reads Impact



NORTH CAROLINA READS BOOK BOX DISTRIBUTION

50

COMMUNITY GROUPS RECEIVED BOOK BOXES

66%

OF GROUP BOOK BOXES SENT TO RURAL COMMUNITIES

216

INDIVIDUALS RECEIVED BOOK BOXES

BOOK BOXES DISTRIBUTED TO

129

CITIES ACROSS THE STATE IN

75

COUNTIES

4,000

BOOKS DISTRIBUTED

"The book boxes played a vital role in uniting members of our community, fostering civic dialogues, and expanding perspectives. Numerous participants conveyed gratitude for the opportunity to delve into new literary realms, prompting reflection and exploration of genres they might not have otherwise considered.

Wren Memorial Library
SILER CITY

"Our participants really enjoyed being part of our book club for the 2nd year in a row. They learned new things about NC and we all learned from each other about different experiences and points of view. Access to free, high-quality books is really important especially for seniors on a fixed income

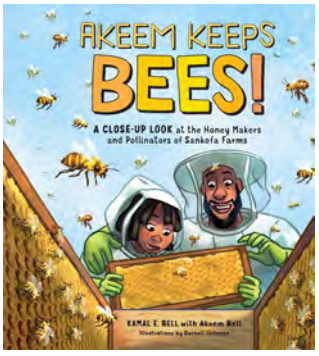
Cultivator
MURFREESBORO

Great Reads from Great Places

North Carolina Humanities selected one book for adult readers and one book for young readers to feature at the Library of Congress National Book Festival. Our selections joined the Great Reads from Great Places reading list, which features books and authors selected by affiliate Centers for the Book in states and territories across the country, showcasing our nation's rich cultural heritage.

In 2025, NC Humanities distributed 440 copies of *Akeem Keeps Bees!* along with original interactive reading-comprehension materials to 22 libraries, schools, and community groups to support childhood literacy. NC Humanities hosted a virtual program featuring Tracy Enerson Wood, the selected Great Reads adult author.

At the National Book Festival in Washington DC, NC Humanities staff represented North Carolina along with author Tracy Enerson Wood.





22

COMMUNITY GROUPS RECEIVED BOOK BOXES

64%

OF GROUP BOOK BOXES SENT TO RURAL COMMUNITIES

68%

OF RECIPIENTS WERE FIRST TIME RECIPIENTS

BOOK BOXES DISTRIBUTED TO

22

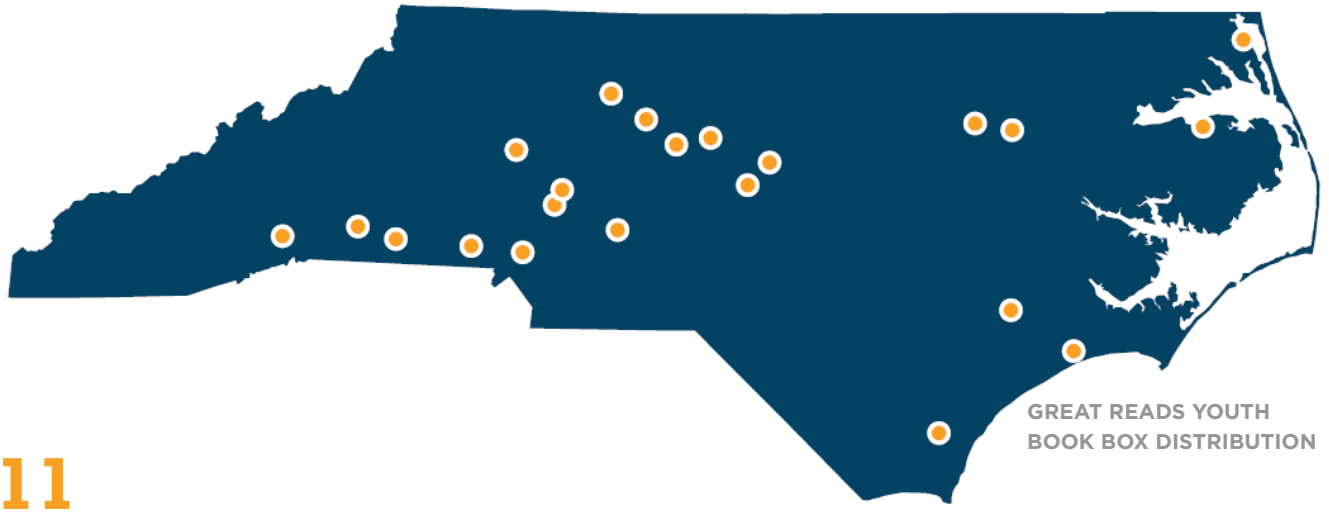
CITIES ACROSS THE STATE IN

17

COUNTIES

440

BOOKS DISTRIBUTED



GREAT READS YOUTH BOOK BOX DISTRIBUTION

The best humanities projects begin with local ideas



COMMUNITY GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

North Carolina Humanities is a leading humanities funder in North Carolina. Each year, NC Humanities offers three types of project grants to libraries, museums, historical societies, and other cultural and educational nonprofit organizations. These grants support projects that explore North Carolina stories, histories, and cultures through reading and discussion programs, exhibitions, films, historical walking tours, and more. Grants strengthen the capacity of local cultural institutions, contribute to local economies, and build connections across communities. NC Humanities staff support applicants and grantees through one-on-one consultations and application reviews.

HUMANITIES GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

$74,291 TOTAL AWARDED



Large Grants

Large Project Grants provide up to $20,000 to support large-scale, long-term public humanities projects. North Carolina Humanities awards Large Project Grants once a year.

Elon University
Elon
Award: $19,991

North Carolina Folklife Institute
Charlotte
Award: $20,000

Summer Fellowships

The Summer Fellowship program provides funding to individual humanities researchers affiliated with North Carolina's higher education institutions. Fellowships provide recipients with dedicated time during June and July to advance or complete their research.

Dr. Amy Vetter

Greensboro
Award: $8,000

Small Project Grants

Small Project Grants provide up to $5,000 to support community-based humanities projects.

Asheville Creative Arts Inc.
Black Mountain
Award: $5,000

Cucalorus Film Foundation
Wilmington
Award: $5,000

Lexington Book Festival
Lexington
Award: $2,750

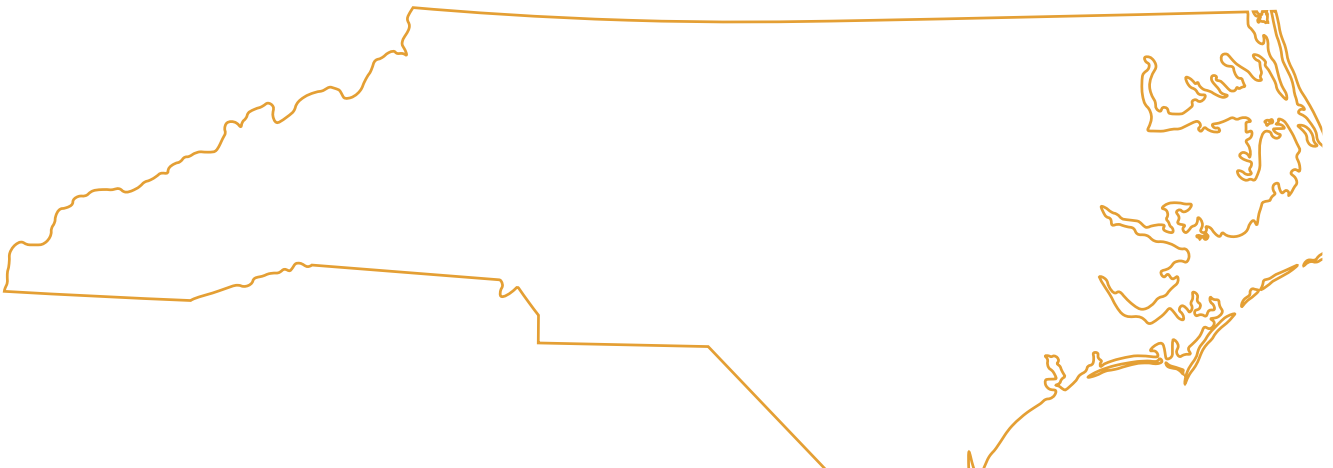
Museum of Ashe County History
Jefferson
Award: $1,635

Town of Liberty - Liberty Public Library
Liberty
Award: $600

Traditional Voices Group
Burnsville
Award: $3,415

Transylvania Heritage Museum
Brevard
Award: $2,900

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill
Award: $5,000



Every partner and donor expands opportunity

PARTNERS & DONORS

We are deeply grateful to the partners and donors who believe in the value of the humanities and our work. Thank you for helping expand opportunities for communities across North Carolina.

Major Partners

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

NC DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

McGuireWoods

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CENTER FOR THE BOOK

Williams
WE MAKE CLEAN ENERGY HAPPEN®

Smithsonian

INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

LIBRARY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Together, we accomplish more than any one of us could achieve alone.

$10,000+ Donations

+ Anonymous

$5,000+ Donations

+ McGuireWoods LLP
+ Tasse and Rich Little
+ Williams Companies Fund at the Tulsa Community Foundation

$1,000+ Donations

+ Kerry Bird
+ Christina Chia
+ C. Amanda Martin
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+ Kathy and William White Jr.

$200–$999 Donations

+ Christine Almeida
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+ James & Carolyn Barkley *In memory of Alice S. Barkley*
+ Skip & Catherine Barkley *In memory of Alice S. Barkley*
+ Margaret D. Bauer
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+ Katheryn & Otis Northington
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+ Michel Robertson
+ Jesse Rosen
+ Ed Sheary
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+ C. Thomas Steele, Jr. *In honor of Mr. and Mrs. Charles T. Steele*
+ Beth Stevenson
+ Amanda Tilley
+ Michael Wakeford *In honor of Leslie Wakeford*
+ Laura Williams

Donations Under $200

+ Lori Allois
+ Becky Anderson *In memory of Fred Chappell*
+ Robert Anthony Jr.
+ John Beck
+ Kathleen C. Berkeley
+ Dr. Barbara Birge
+ Beth Bowser
+ Kathleen Burkinshaw
+ Caswell Friends of the Library
+ Karen S. Cobb
+ Joyce Compton Brown
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+ Darlyne Menscer
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+ Ann Peninger
+ Barbara Perry-Sheldon
+ Cindy Phillips
+ Carmine Prioli *In honor of James W. Clark*
+ Meredith Ritchie
+ Janet Roberts
+ Leonard Rogoff & Deborah Hicks-Rogoff
+ Sue Ross
+ Todd L. Savitt
+ Karen Schrader
+ Eric Solomon
+ Ed. Southern
+ Mary Stephens
+ L. J. Sweeney
+ Justin Tackett
+ John Taylor & Leigh Dillard
+ Mara Lynn Tugmann
+ Todd Wright
+ Mary Chester Wasko *In honor of Denise Cline*
+ Linda G. Wright
+ Theresa Yuschok





People are the heart of North Carolina Humanities

THE TEAM

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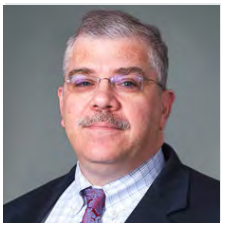
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Staff



Sherry Paula Watkins
Executive Director



Melissa Giblin
Director of North Carolina Center for the Book



Caitlin Patton Stanley
Director of Grants and Compliance



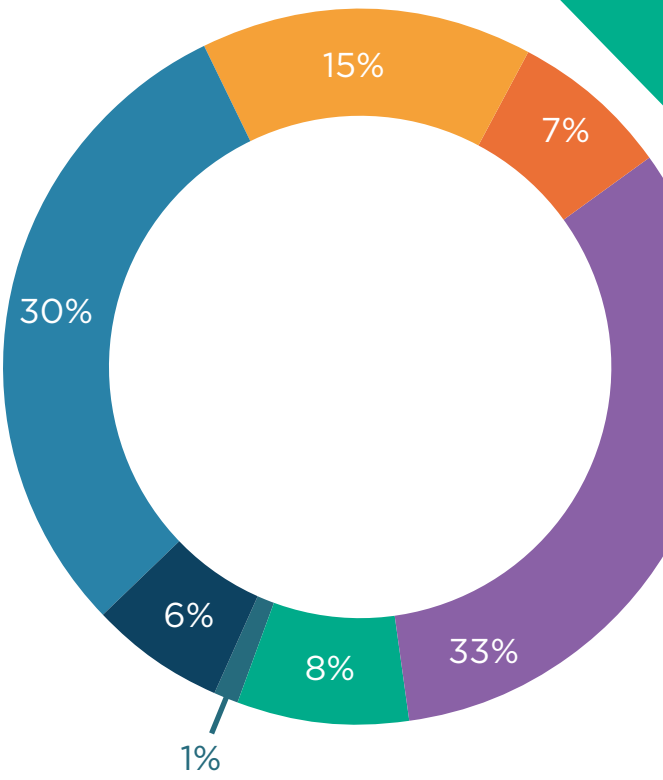


Responsible stewardship creates lasting public benefit

FINANCIALS

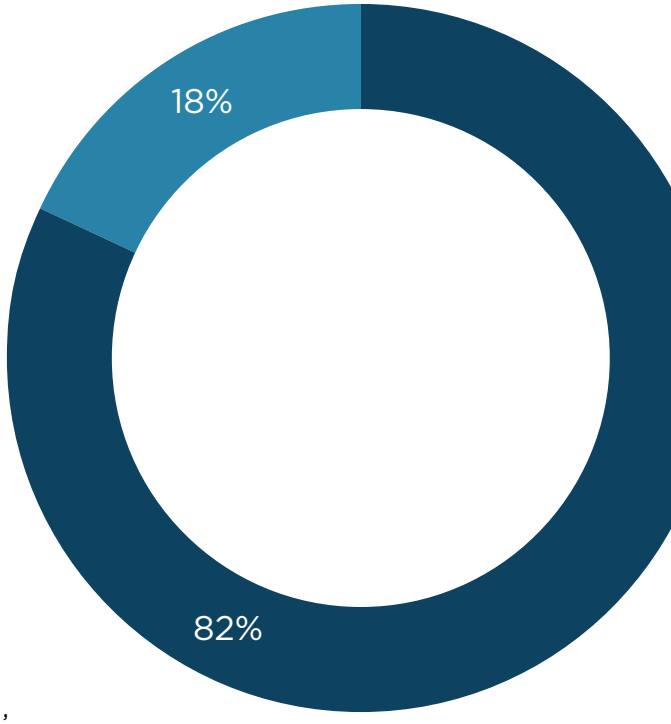
Expenses

Grants & Fellowships	$ 68,534
Program Services	$ 324,224
NC Center for the Book	$ 162,892
Museum on Main Street	$ 78,513
Management	$ 353,280
Fundraising	$ 86,283
Lobbying	$ 9,800
Total Expenses	**$1,083,524**



Revenue

NEH Grants	$1,304,333
Other Grants and Gifts	$ 282,198
Total Revenue	**$1,586,531**



This report reflects financial activity from North Carolina Humanities' fiscal year 2025 (November 1, 2024 - October 31, 2025).

North Carolina humanities

North Carolina Humanities is a statewide nonprofit and affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Any views, findings, conclusions, opinions, or recommendations expressed by our partners and participants do not necessarily represent those of North Carolina Humanities or the National Endowment for the Humanities. Note: some projects and grant funding may have been modified, canceled, or returned. Institutional support for North Carolina Humanities is provided in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities and generous individuals across North Carolina. This report reflects financial activity for fiscal year 2025 (November 1, 2024 - October 31, 2025).

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