

Research Inventory Grant Program Guidelines



Mass Humanities seeks to enhance the interpretation and presentation of history in Massachusetts. Recognizing the difficulty of planning research projects or public programs that rely on uncatalogued or unexamined collections, Mass Humanities will fund inventorying projects that assess specific collections for their research potential. Projects must either be designed with a research question in mind or approach a specific part of the collection. General inventories and inventories prepared for national register or historic district nominations will not be considered.

A *Research Inventory Grant (RIG)* carries a maximum award of \$1,500. Under special circumstances, *all-volunteer* organizations whose collection has not been catalogued at all, and who need to boost their organizational strength, may apply *once* for a *Research Inventory Grant for core organization planning*, which has a higher maximum award (\$2,000), to fund professional consultation about their collection and mission.

The *Research Inventory Grant* program is designed to help small historical organizations identify primary source research materials in preparation for a more extensive research project or a public program. Institutions that successfully complete an inventory project are encouraged to apply for the *Scholar in Residence* program.

Eligible Projects:

- Focus on a specific collection or portion of a collection: defined by a topic and research question; a specific part of the collection (e.g. "the 11 boxes that came from Mrs. X who did research on the X family"); resources relevant to its mission (e.g. define buildings within the purview of the organization that will become part of a historical tour)
- Assess the designated materials or resources for their evidential and informational value.

Who May Apply

Historical organizations in Massachusetts (societies, museums, commissions, and sites) with operating budgets of under \$75,000 are eligible for *Research Inventory Grants*.

Who May Conduct the Inventory?

The inventory may be conducted by a staff member, volunteer, or outside consultant as long as this person:

- Demonstrates an understanding of the historical significance of the collection to be inventoried;
- Prepares the inventory according to professional archival standards or in such a way that it is useful to outside researchers.

What May Be Inventoried:

Primary source materials, such as manuscripts, published records, photographs, artifacts, or other materials in the collection of the applicant organization that relate to one or more specific research questions, as well as resources that bear on the mission and programming of the organization.

Project Products:

- The end product of a *Research Inventory Grant* project may be a catalog, an inventory, or a finding aid. Each individual collection record must contain a content description, retrievable by topics or key words relating to the guiding research question.

- Projects results must be made widely available to the public: deposited in a public library or archive; published online or in a readily available brochure.

Administration of Grant

The applicant institution must designate a staff or board member to act as Project Director, who monitors the progress of the project and ensures that the person taking the inventory has access to the collection.

Budget:

Applicants may request a maximum of \$1,500, which may be used to pay the person who takes the inventory and/or for archival, storage, or preservation materials directly related to the project.

Length of Project:

In general, projects should take place over a period of one to six months.

Deadlines:

- May 1 and November 1. Application must be in the Mass Humanities' office by 5:00 p.m. on the deadline date (if that is not a business day, on the first business day thereafter).
- Applicants must contact Mass Humanities at localhistory@masshumanities.org or (413) 588-1606 to discuss projects at least one month **before** submitting a proposal.

Decisions:

Decisions are made approximately four weeks after the deadline. Projects may be scheduled to begin as early as two months after the submission deadline.

Send three copies of the completed application (original plus two copies) to:

Local History Coordinator
Mass Humanities
66 Bridge Street
Northampton, MA 01060

Applications must be in the Mass Humanities office by 5:00 p.m. on the deadline date.

Examples of Projects Eligible for a Research Inventory Grant

Members of a Cape Cod historical society want to know how the cranberry industry affected their community, and whether their collections and archives could support an exhibit on the topic. A *Research Inventory Grant* enables them to pay a volunteer to identify archival and items and artifacts that relate to the cranberry industry. They discover a wealth of evidence relating to bog ownership, Cape Verdean workers, child labor, and the process of growing and harvesting cranberries. They produce a finding aid that itemizes every cranberry-related artifact, photo, manuscript, and publication in their collections.

A history professor wants to investigate why there were so many women reformers in Hampshire County before the Civil War. Four local historical societies have manuscript collections that contain relevant records, but they have never been catalogued. Before the scholar can do his research, he needs to assess the quantity and quality of the potential research materials. One of the societies applies for a *Research Inventory Grant* (and acts as fiscal agent), and the scholar agrees to accept a small stipend to spend part of his summer going through the materials at all four organizations, locating and describing the ones that are related to women's reform activities. He creates a finding aid that summarizes the content of each relevant document and also identifies its location. Volunteers help him label and store the materials in acid-free boxes purchased with the remaining part of the grant. The next year, the society receives a *Scholar in Residence* grant so that the scholar can do an in-depth study of the female abolitionists whose Minute Books turned up during the inventory project.

A historic house museum has a large, under-documented silver collection. The staff knows that the silver could be used interpretively in house tours, illuminating the owners' class, taste, and social status. They apply for a *Research Inventory Grant* to identify what they have. A curator from a nearby museum examines the collection and is able to document style, manufacturer, and period of manufacture. The curator is also able to tell the house museum staff how the family most likely used the silver, and what it communicated to peers about their status, values, and style. The curator and the staff record the information in a catalog of the collection.

Research Inventory Grant Application

A. The Organization

1. Organization's name, address, phone number, email address, and URL (if available):

2. Organization's staffing and annual operating budget:

3. Organization's mission statement:

B. Project Personnel

4. Project director, title, address, phone number, and email address:

5. Inventory taker, address, phone number, and email address:

6. Fiscal agent (treasurer), title, address, phone number, and email address:

7. Describe the qualifications of the inventory taker. (He/she must (1) demonstrate knowledge of the historical significance of the collection to be inventoried, and (2) be able to inventory the collection according to professional archival or museum standards, in such a way that it is useful to outside researchers. **(Feel free to attach an extra page. Please also attach a two-page resume)**)

C. The Project

8. Why is this project important to your organization? What will you do with the results?

9. Define the scope of the inventory project: What part of the collection will get assessed and/or inventoried? What historical topic and research question will this project address? What resources that relate to the organization's mission will be researched? How large is the amount of material?

10. Describe the materials to be assessed: What sort of items does it include (i.e. manuscripts, newspapers, costumes, paintings, furniture, deeds)?

11. Describe how the inventory will be conducted: who will do what and where and when?

12. What will the final product (inventory, finding aid) look like? (Please attach a sample or a mock up.)

13. Plan of work, including the number of days of work, as well as the schedule and duration of the entire project:

14. Budget: Applicants may request a maximum of \$1,500, which may be used to pay the person who takes the inventory and/or for archival, storage, or preservation materials directly related to the project.

A. Stipend for inventory taker \$ _____

B. Materials (please be specific) \$ _____

C. Other (please explain) \$ _____

D. Total requested \$ _____