2019-21 Teen Reading Lounge Project Guidelines & Application

Information webinar: May 1, 2019 from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Application deadline: May 31, 2019

Introduction
Pennsylvania Humanities Council (PHC) invites public libraries to apply to be part of a special two-year Teen Reading Lounge project with the goals of increasing participation of youth ages 12 - 18 in quality humanities experiences and increasing the capacity of library staff to reach and engage youth, particularly youth of color and youth from low-income communities.

Selected sites will receive $8,000 to plan and develop a Teen Reading Lounge series that reflects the culture and needs of the young people living in their community. Monies can cover direct program expenses and staffing costs like covering a program facilitator’s fees and part-time staff supporting the program.

Selected sites also will become part of a special learning network of libraries across the state and will have access to exclusive professional development opportunities aimed at building staffs’ capacity to strengthen programming for youth.

Applications must be received by Friday, May 31. The application for Teen Reading Lounge is now online. Apply here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/201921TRL.

Questions? Please contact Jennifer Danifo at jdanifo@pahumanities.org.

2019-21 Teen Reading Lounge Project
Teen Reading Lounge first launched in 2010 and has since been in over 80 libraries and reached over 1,500 youth from diverse communities across the state. In 2017-18 PHC made a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and began intentionally selecting sites working with youth of color and youth from low-income communities. We invested in making the program model more flexible and inclusive. Around this time, we also began building out a capacity-building series that helped libraries reflect on and adjust practices that prevent youth of color and youth experiencing socio-economic challenges from engaging in programs.

This focus on diversity, equity and inclusion was inspired by statewide and national trends. First youth across the state and in every county are experiencing poverty. For example, 50% of rural,
white youth are living in poverty and according to the National Center for Children in Poverty 39% families statewide are struggling to make ends meet.

Second, our communities are diversifying. For example, according to the U.S Census Bureau, rural Pennsylvania’s population became more racially diverse from 2000 to 2015. In 2000, 5 percent of the total population was non-white and/or Hispanic. That percentage rose to 9% in 2015. As a result of these trends and changing demographics in our towns and communities there is an even greater opportunity for libraries to provide programming that acknowledges and celebrates the diverse communities we’re now living in.

Third, we know that people of color and those experiencing poverty have been underengaged because of policies and procedures that create barriers. Youth are especially vulnerable to institutional racism and income bias, which can adversely affect a young person’s transition to adulthood. Libraries can help play a role in offsetting these inequities by providing quality opportunities like Teen Reading Lounge that support positive youth development.

Thus, our goals for the 2019-21 project are:

- Build the capacity of libraries to develop quality humanities programming for all youth
- Build important socio-emotional learning skills in youth ages 12 -18
- Promote understanding of the humanities as a vital component of positive youth development.
- Promote positive narratives about diverse youth and the libraries who work with youth.

Youth are the hidden voices in our great democratic society and through Teen Reading Lounge, library staff can build their muscle to identify and remove barriers, celebrate these voices and invite youth to be an active part of planning a program that reflects their interests and needs. Formal education spaces don’t always allow for this level of examination and implementation. Informal learning organizations like libraries can be leaders in boldly addressing bias and inequity by offering programming that is youth driven.

Youth are also at a developmental time when their brains are receptive to more complex thinking about issues like social justice and civic engagement as they begin to question their identity and strive to make a place for themselves in society; therefore they are poised to actively engage in the humanities. Teen Reading Lounge provides a platform for this personal exploration.

In year 1 libraries will build a strong foundation for Teen Reading Lounge to take root. As libraries work with youth and their program facilitators to plan and implement a unique TRL series, they’ll also get training that helps them think deeper about program development. Training will cover topics like creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for youth in the library; building and maintaining strong relationships with youth; developing more inclusive humanities programming; and facilitating discussions that optimizes youth voice.

Year 2 builds on the groundwork developed in the first year, and adds some additional elements to deepen library and youth’s learning. Libraries will once again work with youth to develop another TRL series, this time integrating special civic engagement projects. Because this is the
last year of PHC’s financial support, libraries will also consider how to integrate their learning into long-term program planning and development.

Throughout the two-year project, PHC will offer guidance and coordinate learning opportunities so selected sites feel supported along the way.

**Teen Reading Lounge Framework**

Teen Reading Lounge is an award-winning program that encourages youth ages 12-18 to discuss big ideas and design projects that bring these ideas to life. TRL is based on the belief that the humanities can be an effective tool for positive youth development. Through facilitated discussion and hands-on learning and community projects, youth build a better understanding of themselves, their peers and the communities they live in.

The framework is intentionally flexible so libraries can work with youth to build a program that’s right for them. However, there are a few key elements to the framework that we’ve learned over the years must be present for a program to be successful:

- **Program facilitator.** Program facilitators are community members who work with a site to plan, promote and deliver a program. Program facilitators can come from a variety of backgrounds: humanities, education, social work, social justice and arts education. They co-facilitate the program and work with library staff to build skills needed to serve local youth. In selecting a facilitator, libraries must strive to find someone who intimately understands and appreciates the racial and ethnic identity of participating youth. PHC will guide selected libraries to identify a qualified program facilitator.

- **Featured books or readings.** The TRL featured books or readings can take any form and can be from any genre. TRL groups that have selected books and readings that mirror their life experiences and allow young people to explore their identity and their worlds have yielded the most successful discussions and civic engagement projects.

- **Peer-to-peer humanities discussion.** The heart of the program is facilitated peer-to-peer discussion. Inspired by the themes in the featured texts, young people come together to reflect on, question, and articulate their ideas and perspectives about themselves and the world around them.

- **Civic engagement projects:** Because youth spend much of their time investigating how the themes presented in the readings relate to their lives and to the world around them, PHC feels it’s equally important to give youth a chance to build knowledge and take action on topics that are of special interest. TRL groups are encouraged to work with library staff, program facilitator and local partners to identify and build projects that address the barriers that prevent our society from being more equitable for all.

It’s important to note that in recent years we’ve seen growing interest in youth exploring social justice - the political and philosophical concept which holds that all people should have equal access to wealth, health, well-being, justice, and opportunity. Libraries that are open to youth exploring these issues are a good fit for the project.

Teen Reading Lounge is rigorously evaluated by our partners at the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. Evaluation data has shown that throughout the program youth gain vital socio-emotional learning
skills such as critical thinking, creativity and empathy – skills that major research has shown to be crucial competencies for young people entering the workforce in the coming years. Library staff also report increased confidence in working with diverse youth and co-creating relevant programming with them.

To learn more about the Teen Reading Lounge program and its impact, check out our blog and website.

**Eligibility**
Public libraries that have the interest in connecting with youth of color and youth experiencing poverty are strongly encouraged to apply. PHC is interested in working with staff who want to build an inclusive environment in the library and are willing to examine their own practices and policies to provide better access to programs. In their application, the library should demonstrate that the library director, board members and staff fully support participation in the project. Libraries must also be in good financial standing; PHC may request an audit from applicants.

PHC will hold a special webinar on **May 1 from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.** to provide more information on the project and eligibility requirements.

PHC strongly suggests libraries register for the webinar if they are interested in applying for this opportunity *regardless of their experience with TRL*. The webinar will provide more insight into the program and goals of the project. We encourage libraries to register even if they can’t attend the live webinar so that they receive a recording to watch later.

**Registration URL:** [https://pahumanities.zoom.us/meeting/register/4093af95b571f34c8c34be5db4a05ad8](https://pahumanities.zoom.us/meeting/register/4093af95b571f34c8c34be5db4a05ad8).

**Benefits to Libraries**
In addition to receiving $8,000 to support the development of a Teen Reading Lounge series each year for two years, selected libraries will also receive:

- Professional development for library staff on relevant topics. PHC will host several learning events per year. These events will be a combination of conference calls, in-person workshops and virtual trainings.
- One-on-one coaching with TRL staff and access to special TRL advisors. Our current TRL advisors include [Dr. Valerie Adams-Bass](#) of the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education and [Dr. Fatima Hafiz](#) of Transformational Education Associates.
- PHC’s Teen Reading Lounge growing [resource library](#): reference guide, program planning materials and exclusive promotional materials.
- PHC’s Teen Reading Lounge e-newsletter published 3 times a year and filled with library and program profiles, topical research, expert interviews and relevant resources.
- Access to a growing network of libraries across the state doing similar work.

**Selection Process and Criteria**
Applications are reviewed by a committee of PHC staff and advisors. In addition to being in good financial standing, successful applicants should demonstrate institutional commitment to:
● Including traditionally marginalized youth in program planning and implementation.
● Co-designing a Teen Reading Lounge series with youth that reflects their interests and needs.
● Exploring how the humanities can engage youth and support their growth and development.
● Recruiting a program facilitator and paying that individual a fair wage for their work.
● Exploring the role diversity, equity and inclusion play in youth programming.
● Reflecting on how existing program practices may create barriers for youth of color and youth from low-income backgrounds.
● Leveraging existing partnerships with community partners and other community organizations serving youth and their families (schools, YMCAs, social service orgs, etc.)
● Contributing to the learning and development of library staff through participation in the TRL learning network.
● Integrating learning in long-term program planning and implementation practices.

PHC may conduct site visits as part of the application review. You’ll be notified in advance if your library’s been chosen for a site visit.

Applicants will be notified by July 31 if they’ve been selected to be part of the project.

Please note: trainings and workshops are still being developed. However, the 2019-21 TRL journey will start with two activities:

● PHC’s Welcome to Teen Reading Lounge virtual kick-off meeting in early October. This is designed for selected sites to get to know one another and learn more about upcoming activities for the 2019-21 project.
● PHC’s Getting Ready for Teen Reading Lounge Workshop, a day and a half immersive learning event that will be held at the PaTTAN Center in Harrisburg, PA in November/December 2019.

Dates for both of these events will be confirmed in summer 2019.

**Expectations of Selected Libraries**
In addition to our review criteria, we are interested in working with libraries that are open to collaborating with PHC staff, evaluators and program advisors during the project and learning what makes this program successful. Selected libraries must:

● Participate in the project from October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2021. (Note: program funding is awarded on a yearly basis.)
● Develop and run a Teen Reading Lounge series each year that features strong humanities content.
● Recruit at least 10-15 youth to participate in the project per year. This group must reflect the diversity of the library’s community.
- Identify and contract with a community member to serve as program facilitator for the program. Libraries must commit to paying this individual a fair wage. (Note: PHC can provide guidance on recruitment of a facilitator.)
- Site coordinator and facilitator must actively participate in the professional development series and learning activities, including monthly community of practice calls and in-person and virtual trainings.
- Promote the program and work with community partners to recruit hard-to-reach youth.
- Participate in all evaluation activities and data collection efforts that help PHC and sites understand program outcomes and impacts.
- Match the full amount of the grant each year through in-kind or cash contributions (see more below).
- Support PHC’s advocacy efforts.

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The full application with narrative starts on page 8. We recommend libraries prepare their application before getting into the online application. There is no way to save answers and go back to an incomplete application in the system.

Apply here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/201921TRL.

PHC is not asking for a full program budget at this time because much of the program will be built in collaboration with youth. Selected libraries will work with PHC to complete the budgeting process in fall/winter 2019. However, libraries will be asked to submit their most recent audited financial statement for review so we can determine the financial health of the library and assess their ability to competently oversee grant monies.

It’s important for applicants to know that selected libraries will be asked to provide a one-to-one match of the grant funds provided by PHC. These contributions, or cost share, can be outright funds and/or in-kind donations. Outright funds are direct contributions you receive in support of a project. In-kind contributions may be donations of services, space, time, materials, equipment, etc., over and above your outright funds.

About the Pennsylvania Humanities Council
The Pennsylvania Humanities Council is an independent partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities and part of a network of 56 state humanities councils that spans the nation and U.S. jurisdictions. Today, across the commonwealth, we put the humanities in action to create positive change. Our programs and grants bring Pennsylvanians together to build avenues for civic involvement and community development, and for youth and adult learners to strengthen skills for school, work, and personal improvement. Our operations are funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities through the Federal/State Partnership Office, with additional program funding from generous individuals, foundations, corporations, and government agencies.
Teen Reading Lounge is made possible by Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services administered by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, Department of Education, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Tom Wolf, Governor. Additional support is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, generous individuals, foundations, and corporations.
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Library Information
1. Please tell us about your library:
   a. Library name
   b. Full mailing address
   c. County
   d. Phone number
   e. Email address
   f. Library website
2. Library’s Operations
   a. Library’s operating budget
   b. Teen programming budget
   c. # of full-time staff
   d. # of part-time staff
   e. # of volunteers
   f. # of board members
   g. # of staff dedicated to teen services
   h. # of teen programs in the last calendar year
3. Does the library have a current audit? (Note: PHC may request audits from applicants.)
4. Staff contact:
   a. Full name
   b. Title/role at library
   c. Email address
   d. Library director (if different from contact)
   e. Library director email address
   f. Board president’s name
   g. Board president’s email address
5. Which social media accounts does the library currently use?
6. Please tell us about the population you serve by providing percentages for the following demographic categories. (Not sure check out American FactFinder.)
   a. %White or Caucasian
   b. % Black or African-American
   c. % Latino/a or Hispanic
   d. % Asian or Asian American
   e. % Native American
7. What percentage of the population you serve could be classified as low-income?
8. What middle and high schools are in your service area? Do you partner with them to promote or plan services and programming?
9. Does the library use youth volunteers or have an official teen advisory board or group?
10. Is there anything else we should know about the community and the youth your library serves?

Application Narrative
1. Why is the library interested in the Teen Reading Lounge project? What do you hope to learn or gain by participating?
2. Please describe your current teen programs. We're particularly interested in programs and activities that feature the humanities, civic engagement or reading and discussion. If the library has offered programs or been part of any special efforts to explore social justice issues, please indicate those here.

3. What are your current teen services and programming goals? How will hosting a Teen Reading Lounge program help you achieve those goals?

4. How does the library typically plan teen programs? How might participation in this project change the way you approach program planning?

5. Please tell us about the individuals involved in teen services and programming at your library. What roles do they play? What experience and assets do they bring to the work? How might they participate in this project?

6. What experience does the library or staff have working with low-income youth or youth of color? Why is it important for your library to connect with these audiences? Are there other audiences you are interested in connecting with?

7. How will library leadership (director, board) and other staff support the project and Teen Reading Lounge?

8. What family and youth-serving community organizations are in your area? Do you currently partner with them? How might you partner with them during a Teen Reading Lounge program? (Examples of youth-serving organizations are schools, afterschool programs, social service organizations for youth and families and cultural organizations that serve youth.)

9. Libraries selected for the project will be given a grant. Please tell us about the library's experience overseeing grant money, particularly funding from state or federal sources. Who will oversee the grant budget? How is the board involved in grant oversight?

10. Is there anything else you would like us to know?