



Legislative Report on the Civics Project Trust Fund: FY2024

Through state budget line item 1595-0115, the Civics Project Trust Fund will promote civics education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through direct grants to local education agencies, educational resources created by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and professional learning opportunities.

January 2025

This document was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

135 Santilli Highway, Everett, MA 02149

Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370

www.doe.mass.edu





January 2025

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit this Report to the Legislature: *Civics Project Trust Fund: FY2024*. The Civics Project Trust Fund was established by [Chapter 296 of the Acts of 2018](#) to support the development and implementation of the [2018 History and Social Science Framework](#) and the student-led civics projects required by law. This report is pursuant to Chapter 296, which stipulates:

“...the commissioner shall report to the clerks of the house of representatives and senate, the joint committee on education and the house and senate committees on ways and means on the [Civics Project Trust Fund]'s activity. The report shall include, but not be limited to: (i) the source and amount of funds received; (ii) the amounts distributed and the purpose of expenditures from the fund, including but not limited to, funds expended to assist school districts in meeting the requirements in section 2 of chapter 71; (iii) any grants provided to institutions of higher education and other stakeholder organizations; and (iv) anticipated revenue and expenditure projections for the next year...”

The 2018 Framework emphasizes the development of students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, with a focus on engaging all learners in inquiry-based history and social science education that is highly relevant to their roles in a diverse democratic society. In addition to these standards, Chapter 296 requires each public school with eighth-grade students and each public high school to provide at least one student-led, non-partisan civics project for every student, a mandate that began in the 2020-2021 school year. The law also tasks DESE with creating the Commonwealth Civics Challenge in order to offer eighth-grade students across the state the opportunity to present their civics projects to a wider audience.

In fiscal year 2023-2024 (FY2024), DESE supported implementation of the 2018 Framework and Chapter 296 in a variety of ways. We awarded direct grant funding to districts to support their work engaging teachers in professional development, selecting and implementing civics curriculum, and providing students with civic action projects. We continued the groundbreaking work to develop our own free, open access Investigating History curriculum, a set of social studies curricular materials for grades 3-7. Investigating History materials for grades 5-7 were released publicly this past school year and have already been adopted in hundreds of classrooms statewide.

We continued to offer professional development directly to teachers with the launch of our statewide Civics Pathways. Designed and facilitated by teachers, these free professional development courses will support the continued growth and development of hundreds of Massachusetts civic educators.

Finally, for the second year, we hosted the Massachusetts Civics Project Showcases, expanded to three regional events. These “science fairs for civics” featured projects from eighth grade and high school students from 70 schools across the Commonwealth addressing topics from school start times to composting to youth mental health. Students were overflowing with enthusiasm to share their projects with a diverse group of community advisors including legislators, educators, and community advocates. I invite you to watch these [video highlights from the day](#) and to consider joining us at one of our showcases this spring.

At a time in which partisan polarization may lead some to despair about our political landscape, I am inspired and hopeful as I see what our students can do when they are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to take civic action on issues that matter to them. Through high-quality civics education, Massachusetts students are engaging in relevant, real-world, and interactive learning experiences that truly epitomize the Department’s educational vision. I am pleased that using the Civics Project Trust Fund, the Department has been able to continue its investment in this important area, and I look forward to the work ahead this school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Russell Johnston". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Russell D. Johnston
Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education



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Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) respectfully submits this Report to the Legislature: *Civics Project Trust Fund: FY2023*, pursuant to [Chapter 296 of the Acts of 2018](#), which stipulates:

“There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate fund to be known as the Civics Project Trust Fund...Annually, no later than October 1, the commissioner shall report to the clerks of the house of representatives and senate, the joint committee on education and the house and senate committees on ways and means on the fund's activity. The report shall include, but not be limited to: (i) the source and amount of funds received; (ii) the amounts distributed and the purpose of expenditures from the fund, including but not limited to, funds expended to assist school districts in meeting the requirements in section 2 of chapter 71; (iii) any grants provided to institutions of higher education and other stakeholder organizations; and (iv) anticipated revenue and expenditure projections for the next year...”

The Civics Project Trust Fund is intended to support the development and implementation of the 2018 History and Social Science Framework and the student-led civics projects required by law.

- The **2018 History and Social Science Framework** places the development of students’ civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions at its core; the standards in this Framework seek to engage all students in inquiry-based history and social science education that is deeply relevant to their role as participants in a diverse democratic society.
- **Chapter 296 of the Acts of 2018** requires that each public-school serving students in the eighth grade and each public high school shall provide not less than one student-led, non-partisan civics project for each student. This requirement first took effect in the 2020-2021 school year. This law also directs DESE to establish the commonwealth civics challenge, available to eighth-grade students to showcase student-led civics projects.

In the fiscal year 2023-2024 (FY2024) budget, the state appropriated \$2.5 million for the Civics Project Trust Fund to promote civics education in the Commonwealth in line with the 2018 Framework and requirements of Chapter 296. Per Chapter 296, the fund may be used:

- to assist with the teaching of United States history and civics, including professional development training;
- to assist with the implementation of the student-led civics project requirement, including professional development training;
- for the development of the history and social science curriculum framework, including civics education;

- for the collaboration with institutions of higher education and other stakeholder organizations; and/or
- to establish a competitive evaluation of a student-led civics project, available to all eighth grade students.

Summary of Major Trust Fund Revenue and Expenditures

Per Chapter 296, this section includes a description of:

- the source and amount of funds received in FY2024,
- the amounts distributed and the purpose of expenditures from the fund in FY2024, and
- anticipated revenue and expenditure projections for FY2025.

Chapter 296 also requires that this report include information on grants provided to higher education institutions and other stakeholder organizations; no such grants were awarded in FY2024.

FY2024 Funds Received

In its FY2024 budget, the state appropriated \$2.5 million for the Civics Project Trust Fund. The Civics Project Trust Fund also received a donation of \$306,000 from the One8 Foundation. The One8 Foundation is partnering with DESE to support the implementation of the Investigating History curriculum.

FY2024 Expenditures

In FY2024, DESE used the Civics Project Trust Fund primarily to provide direct grant awards to local education agencies (LEAs) as well as to fund several key projects intended to strengthen history and civics education, as follows (information accurate as of September 20, 2024):

	Expenditures
Grant Awards	\$904,135
Civics Teaching and Learning Grant (FC 589)	\$918,479
Investigating History Expansion Grant (FC 0116)	\$45,500
<i>Returned funds from grantees</i>	(<i>\$59,844</i>)
Project Expenses	\$1,270,329
Investigating History	\$346,725
Civics Professional Learning Pathways	\$572,305
Statewide History and Civics Evaluation	\$183,417
Civics Project Showcases	\$106,885
Student Government Day	\$8,078
Media Literacy	\$52,920

Employee Costs	\$93,800
Miscellaneous and Indirect Costs	\$31,983
Total Expended (as of September 20, 2024)	\$2,300,248

FY2025 Major Revenue and Expenditure Projections

In its FY2025 budget, the state appropriated \$2.5 million to the Civics Trust Fund.

Significant spending through FY2025 will include direct grant awards to local education agencies and additional projects focused on strengthening civics instruction and showcasing student civic work. More specifically, major projects to be funded in FY2025 include revisions, professional development, and evaluation for the grades 3–7 Investigating History curriculum; continued implementation of comprehensive, statewide Civics Pathways; continued evaluation of the current implementation of the History/Social Science Framework and student-led civics projects; a policy review of media literacy education; support for Student Government Day; and a statewide series of four civics project showcases.

Anticipated, estimated expenditures on these projects are listed below; note that these expenditures exceed revenue allocated in FY2025 and will draw, in part, on funds appropriated in prior years and rolled over into FY2025:

	Expenditures
Grants to Public Entities	\$1,725,000
Civics Teaching and Learning Grant (FC 589)	\$1,500,000
Investigating History Expansion Grant (FC 0116)	\$225,000
Project Expenses	\$2,700,000
Investigating History	\$1,000,000
Statewide History and Civics Evaluation	\$225,000
Civics Professional Learning Pathways	\$1,000,000
Civics Project Showcases	\$225,000
Media Literacy Review	\$250,000
Student Government Day	\$10,000
Employee Costs	\$100,000
Total Estimated FY2024 Expenditures	\$4,525,000

Detailed Report on FY2024 Trust Fund Spending

Grant Awards

Civics Teaching and Learning Grant (FC 589)

In FY2024, these grants supported the development and/or purchase of curricula intended to further students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions at any grade level;

professional development for teachers and/or administrators focused on the instruction of civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions at any grade level; implementation of civics projects in eighth grade and high school as required by law; and civics learning experiences that are designed to enrich core curricular learning, including participation in local or regional civics project showcases.

More generally, the grant supported schools and districts in developing students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions as described in the [2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework](#). The grant also supported the implementation of the nonpartisan student-led civics projects as required by [Chapter 296 of the Acts of 2018](#).

DESE prioritized proposals that exemplified:

- **Equity.** As a foundational step towards the long-term goal of culturally and linguistically sustaining learning environments, in 2023-2025, DESE will focus on promoting culturally responsive learning environments that are also linguistically sustaining. Civics learning experiences should create environments where students' cultures, identities, and linguistic backgrounds are viewed as assets and valuable resources. These learning experiences should further students' academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical awareness; they should also leverage explicit language instruction to provide all students access to rigorous content.
- **Deeper learning.** Grant-funded projects should help students master civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, appropriate to grade-level standards, through creative agency and opportunities to actively "do civics." Civic action should be student-led and meaningful to students as individuals, and be relevant to their identities and lived experiences. Civic learning should be an integrated part of the larger curriculum, not isolated experiences, lessons, or units.
- **Sustainability.** Grant-funded projects should take steps towards long-term enhancements to civics teaching and learning. Investments such as professional development for educators or acquisition of needed instructional materials can provide benefits long past the period of this grant, as opposed to "one-off" activities.

Competitive priority in the scoring process was also given to:

- LEAs with at least one school identified as requiring assistance according to the state accountability system.
- LEAs with a student population in which greater than 40% are designated as low-income
- A group of LEAs applying together.

Because this grant is designed to allow recipients to use funds across two years, in FY2024, two cycles' worth of recipients were allocated funding. The purpose and priorities for both grant cycles were similar.

- In the June 2022 grant cycle, DESE funded 42 proposals (of 54 received) with a total of \$1,012,114 distributed over two years (FY2023 and FY2024).
- In the June 2023 grant cycle, DESE funded 29 proposals (of 47 received) with a total of \$882,957 to be distributed over two years (FY2024 and FY2025).

A list of all awards for both grant cycles can be found in **Appendix A**.

Investigating History Expansion Grant (FC 0116)

[Investigating History](#) is an openly available, comprehensive set of history/social studies curricular materials for Grades 5 through 7 (Grades 3 and 4 are currently in pilot with anticipated release in Summer 2025). The Investigating History materials are fully aligned to the [2018 Massachusetts History/Social Science Framework](#); and are anchored in four instructional principles: historical inquiry and investigation, historical empathy and human connections, civic engagement and current world relevance, and culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy.

In partnership with the [One8 Foundation](#), DESE offered a grant opportunity that provided funds for LEAs that were implementing Investigating History in the 2023-24 school year and wished to deepen and extend their Investigating History work by expanding their implementation to additional units, classrooms, and/or grades. Grant funds were dedicated to professional development for educators.

DESE prioritized proposals from LEAs that:

- Had a schedule that allowed for the necessary amount of social studies instructional time;
- Could ensure systems and structures for professional collaboration among pilot teachers if there are multiple pilot teachers per school, and between pilot teachers and support staff (e.g. inclusion teachers and ELL specialists);
- Committed to having all pilot teachers (as well as any interested leaders and support staff) participate in all required professional development training; and
- Committed to fully implementing at least two units in any grade level.

DESE gave competitive priority to districts and schools in chronically underperforming status and the Strategic Transformation Region; and/or Local Education Agencies (districts, charter schools, or Collaboratives) that were adopting/using Investigating History for grades 5–7 across the entire LEA.

Ultimately, DESE funded 10 proposals (of 16 received) and awarded \$63,700 in FY2024. Grantees will receive additional funding in FY2025 (estimated at \$225,000) to support school-year professional development.

A list of awards can be found in **Appendix B**.

Project Expenses

Investigating History

As described above, [Investigating History](#) is an innovative, open-source history/social science curriculum that DESE is developing for third through seventh grades. It is designed to align with the Massachusetts 2018 History/Social Science Framework, developing students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions through meaningful tasks that connect past and present. Essential questions throughout the curriculum invite students to consider issues of leadership, governance, and advocacy, thus deepening their preparation for civic life. DESE has a variety of organizational partners in developing this curriculum; in FY2024, major partners included Primary Source, Educurious, and the Tufts Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

During the 2023-2024 school year, 239 schools received grant funding to support implementing curriculum for grades 5, 6, and 7. The participating schools were from a geographically and demographically diverse group of Massachusetts districts. In addition, teachers from 25 schools participated in a field test of curriculum materials for 3rd and 4th grade. Based on their feedback, 3rd and 4th grade units were revised and readied for a full pilot for the 2024-2025 school year. Work has also begun on comprehensive coherence and alignment revisions across the 3rd-7th grade materials.

Investigating History is funded by a variety of sources in FY2024, including **\$346,725** from the Civics Project Trust Fund.

Civics Professional Learning Pathways

In collaboration with the Democratic Knowledge Project and Project Zero at Harvard University, iCivics, and Emerging America at the Collaborative for Educational Services—as well as a committee of teacher leaders—DESE piloted an ambitious series of professional learning offerings that opened to educators in Fall 2023. These [Civics Pathways](#) provide sustained, coherent, in-person, and virtual learning offerings tailored to educators' needs and focused on different elements of civics content and pedagogy. In FY2024, total expenditures for this project were **\$572,305**.

Statewide History and Civics Evaluation

In partnership with research organization MC² Education, DESE began a statewide history and civics evaluation, with a particular focus on the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant, implementation of the student-led civics project, and implementation of the 2018 History and Social Science Framework. The evaluation builds upon findings from an initial study completed in 2020 and places a deep emphasis on capturing and understanding variation across subgroups of schools, teachers, and students. In FY2024, total expenditures for this project were **\$183,417**.

Civics Project Showcases

This spring, DESE expanded the statewide [Civics Project Showcases](#) to three regional events located in Amherst, Worcester, and Bridgewater. Over 500 students from 70 schools participated in the three events. These showcases, required by legislation, are intended to provide students a chance to celebrate their civic action and engage with real-world stakeholders. DESE engaged The Anthem Group to provide event planning services and logistical support. Total expenditures towards this project were **\$106,885**.

Student Government Day

In April, DESE held its annual Student Government Day event (enacted by the Massachusetts Legislature in 1947) in partnership with the Massachusetts State House. This program provides students from Massachusetts's public and private high schools with the opportunity to participate in the legislative process through simulated House and Senate formal sessions. Total expenditures towards this project were **\$8,078**.

Media Literacy Review

In partnership with Media Literacy Now, DESE began planning for a comprehensive landscape scan of media literacy education across the Commonwealth. Research activities for this project will start in FY2025. Total expenditures towards this project were **\$52,920**.

Employee Costs

To support this ambitious portfolio of civics work, DESE applied **\$93,800** to engage a contract employee focused on civics resources and supports as well as the Civics Project Showcases.

Looking Ahead: Major FY2025 Expenditures

In FY2025, DESE will deepen its commitment to, and investment in, many of these projects. Investigating History expands to a grade 3 and 4 pilot and will be available across grades 3 to 7, with expanded supports for Massachusetts's growing population of multilingual learners, by school year 2025-2026. The Civics Pathways enter their second year, reaching more teachers and incorporating a new pathway focused on elementary civics. The third year of the Civics Project Showcases will feature four regional showcases to provide even more students the opportunity to share and celebrate their civic learning. Additionally, DESE is excited to continue its research and evaluation effort to take stock of the current state of civics education across the Commonwealth, as well as launch a similar review of media literacy instruction.

Alongside these projects, DESE plans to continue offering grant funding to support districts' individual efforts to strengthen civics teaching and learning. As a result, the anticipated expenditures for FY2025 currently exceed anticipated revenues by approximately \$2 million. This carried-over funding from prior fiscal years will allow DESE to still support this ambitious portfolio of civics work in FY2025.

Summary

Chapter 296 and the 2018 Framework emphasize that a primary goal of history and social science education in Massachusetts is to prepare students for civic life. In FY2024, DESE utilized the Civics Project Trust Fund to enhance civics education through various initiatives, thoughtfully developed to address the needs of educators across the state, while also elevating their expertise. The dedication of Massachusetts teachers to discovering innovative approaches for engaging students in civic learning is evident, and DESE is eager to continue partnering with them in the 2024-2025 school year to further support their important work with their students.

Appendix A: Civics Teaching and Learning Grant Recipients

Awarded in June 2022 Cycle (grant funds spent through June 2024)

	Award Amount
Acton Boxborough	\$26,563
Andover	\$34,000
Barnstable	\$7,550
Beverly	\$4,207
Boston	\$60,000
Boston Green Academy	\$7,514
Brookline	\$49,300
Canton	\$34,000
Chelsea	\$21,200
Community Day Charter School - Prospect	\$34,000
Dennis Yarmouth	\$20,000
Dighton Rehoboth	\$16,235
Excel Academy	\$34,000
Fitchburg	\$40,000
Frontier Regional <i>with Conway, Deerfield, Sunderland, Whately</i>	\$12,750
Global Learning Charter School	\$9,350
Greenfield	\$17,000
Hingham	\$4,080
Hingham <i>with Abington, Braintree, Carver, Cohasset, Duxbury, Easton, Foxborough, Greater New Bedford Vocational Technical, Mansfield, Marshfield, Norwell, Pembroke, Sandwich, Scituate, Silver Lake Regional, Walpole, Whitman-Hanson Regional</i>	\$30,600
KIPP Academy (Boston)	\$855
KIPP Academy (Lynn)	\$11,798
Lawrence	\$60,000
Lowell Community Charter School	\$11,220
Lynn	\$50,000
Map Academy Charter School	\$20,000
Mendon Upton Regional School District <i>with Ashland Public Schools</i>	\$33,847
Methuen	\$40,664
Milton	\$34,000
Mohawk Trail Regional School District	\$10,247
Norwood	\$33,814
Oxford	\$2,629
Peabody	\$40,000

Pittsfield	\$12,100
Quabbin	\$30,345
Randolph	\$33,813
Salem	\$9,327
Salem Academy	\$17,000
Saugus	\$7,300
Springfield	\$11,343
South Shore Charter School	\$17,680
Sutton	\$10,731
Taunton	\$53,500
Westfield	\$22,950
Winthrop	\$17,000
Total Awards (across FY2023 and FY2024)	\$1,054,512

Awarded in June 2023 Cycle (grant funds available through June 2025)

	Award Amount
Barnstable	\$20,650
Boston	\$60,000
Brockton	\$58,005
Brookline	\$60,000
Chelsea	\$45,900
Community Day Charter School	\$7,700
Dennis Yarmouth	\$40,000
Everett	\$26,680
Greenfield	\$31,000
Hudson	\$23,400
Innovation Charter Academy	\$19,620
Lowell	\$60,000
Lowell Community Charter School	\$11,250
Lynn	\$60,000
Match Charter Academy	\$16,875
Milford	\$28,000
Mohawk Trail Regional School District	\$16,446
New Heights Charter	\$19,980
Peabody	\$40,000
Pittsfield	\$15,600
Quabbin Regional School District	\$29,290
Ralph Mahar	\$20,000
Randolph	\$30,924

Salem	\$13,735
Salem Academy	\$20,000
Springfield	\$29,940
Stoneham	\$20,000
Winchendon	\$25,372
West Springfield	\$35,590
Total Awards (across FY2024 and FY2025)	\$882,957

Appendix B: Investigating History Expansion Grant Recipients

	Award Amount
Argosy Collegiate Charter School (District)	\$1,750
Attleboro	\$9,450
Greenfield	\$1,750
Narragansett	\$1,400
North Middlesex	\$11,200
Salem	\$3,150
Taunton	\$22,750
UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester (District)	\$6,300
Uxbridge	\$2,800
Winchendon	\$3,150
Total Awards	\$63,700