

***Reading Between the Lines***  
A Statewide Program of the New York Humanities Council  
[www.nyhumanities.org](http://www.nyhumanities.org)

## **Implementation Tips & Information for Host Organizations**

### **Selecting Your Series**

- Consider a *Reading Between the Lines* series an opportunity for your organization to connect not just with your existing base but also as a capacity-building event, a chance for you to reach out to new participants and for them to learn more about your organization.
- When reviewing the available series at [www.nyhumanities.org/discussion\\_groups](http://www.nyhumanities.org/discussion_groups), consider what topics will be of special interest to your community. National and local news, current events, upcoming holidays or celebratory months (Women’s History, Black History, etc.), regional history and local interest groups are all good areas to start your brainstorming.
- Try to identify a community need or interest that can be explored through a *Reading Between the Lines* series and that will have a broad appeal in your area.

### **Scheduling Your Series**

- It is up to the host organization and the facilitator to pick the dates and times for the series. We suggest that the sessions meet monthly on the same day and week each month (e.g. “the second Tuesday”), but this may not always be possible given holidays, etc.
- The series must be scheduled at a time when working people can attend. Generally weekday evenings have proven to be most successful. Each session should be scheduled to last 90 minutes.
- The dates and times for the series should be scheduled at least six weeks prior to the first session to give you ample time to publicize the series.
- You should notify the Council of the dates/times as soon as they are set.

### **Size & Make-up of the Group**

- The maximum number of people who can participate in a *Reading Between the Lines* series is 25, but the ideal group size is roughly 15. Be aware that you may have to publicize widely to get this size group (see *Publicizing Your Series* below). There is no official “minimum” number, but if you are having trouble registering participants you should discuss the situation with the Council.
- All *Reading Between the Lines* series must be open to the general public and no fee can be charged for participating in the series.
- Participants should sign up for all four sessions, although it is realistic to assume that not everyone will make every session.
- If you ended up with more than 25 people who want to participate you can create a waiting list. If you have a large number of additional people who want to participate, you may want to talk with the Council about offering the series a second time.
- When someone signs up for the series be sure to get all of their relevant contact information including address, phone number and email (a sample registration form is available on our website, but you can use any format you like).

## Publicizing Your Series

- Plan to begin publicizing your series at least four weeks prior to the first session. Please make every effort to draw a large and diverse audience to your program.
- Good tools for publicizing your program include press releases and/or public service announcements to local media, newsletter and community calendar entries, website and email announcements, notices to your organizational members and flyers distributed throughout your community. Templates for publicity materials are available on our website.
- Plan to distribute flyers widely through both mailings (see *Reimbursements* below) and drop-offs. Bookstores, local libraries, community centers, coffee houses, school campuses, churches and store bulletin boards are all good places to leave your flyer. Please be sure to get permission to leave or post the flyers. *You do not have to use the flyer template provided by the Council on our website, but you must include the Council logo, the “We The People” logo, and the credit language on the Council flyer, and the Council must approve your flyer before it is distributed.*
- Press releases are a good way to get the word out to new audiences. A press release template is available on our website for you to adapt. *As with the flyer above, you must use the Council credit language and organizational description included in the template.*
- For mailings, try to reach beyond your usual members and program participants to reach new audiences. Many sites have had success targeting interest groups related to the series. For example, labor union members for work-related series, bird watching groups for environment-related series, etc.
- The Council lists all *Reading Between the Lines* series on its website at [www.nyhumanities.org](http://www.nyhumanities.org) and links to the host site web page when possible.
- In all your promotional materials be clear about what type of program this is and the expectation that everyone will read, participate and make an effort to come to all sessions.

## Distributing & Tracking Books

### ***For host sites using Council-supplied books:***

- The Council will generally send you 20 copies of each book in the series at least four weeks before the start of the series. If you know you will need all 25 copies of the books, notify the Council as soon as possible so we can send the additional copies.
- Before you begin signing people up for your series decide how participants will get copies of the first book in the series from your site (where and when books will be picked up) and be sure that everyone at your site is aware of this information. *It is recommended that sites not give all four books to participants before the series starts, but rather that participants return one book and get the next one at each session.*
- Book tracking forms are available on our website and it is crucial that you use them to keep track of who has checked out a book so you can contact anyone who does not return their copy in a timely manner. *Host sites are responsible for returning all of the Council-supplied books at the end of the series* (see *Follow up* below).
- Sometimes participants will want to hang on to books after a session to re-read (or read for the first time!). Decide ahead of time if you will allow this. It may mean extra work tracking down books once the series is over.

### ***For host sites not using Council-supplied books:***

- There are several options for acquiring and distributing books to your participants. All titles are in print, affordable and available at bookstores and online retailers. Your organization may purchase books to sell to your participants or participants can acquire the titles

independently. Notify your local library system early on and they may be able to put copies on reserve at your local branch. Your local bookstore may consider a discounted rate for titles purchased through them, especially in large amounts. Online book retailers often sell used books and may have used copies of your series titles available. Make sure the series titles and suggestions for acquiring them are available to your participants when they register.

### **Working with the Series Facilitator**

- You and the series facilitator should work as a team. The facilitator is responsible for the discussions themselves and the host site liaison is responsible for all of the logistical aspects of the series, but the program works best if you communicate regularly about all aspects of the series.
- You will probably have met or talked to all participants ahead of time so you can help your facilitator by giving them a brief overview of the make-up of the group. You should also supply the facilitator with a copy of the registration form so they have contact information for all the participants.
- During the discussions you should be helpful but resist the urge to take over. You may have more experience working with the public than your facilitator, and it can be hard to sit back and watch someone else learn this role, but that's what they are there to do. That being said, you should feel free to give constructive feedback after sessions.

### **Implementation of the Series**

- You or someone else from the host site should be at every session to welcome the group, check books in and out, and make sure all the logistics run smoothly. Decide ahead of time if you want to participate in the discussion or just be an observer and let the facilitator know.
- Be sure to get an accurate count of attendance at each session for your final report to the Council.
- Discuss set-up of space with your facilitator ahead of time so that it's ready to go before participants arrive.
- If possible, have a light snack and/or drinks for participants.
- If a participant misses a session please give them a quick call or drop them an email to see why. You don't want to hound anyone, but often it can encourage him or her to come back. If they opt not to return, please make an effort to discern why not, as this is also very useful feedback.

### **Costs & Reimbursements**

- The Council covers the cost of the facilitator's fee as well as shipping the books to and from the sites. The host sites are responsible for the cost of publicizing the series (unless another agreement has been reached, outlined in a separate letter).
- To collect reimbursement for the return shipping of the books the host site should submit receipts to the Council within two weeks after the books have been returned.

### **Follow up & Evaluation**

- All Council-supplied copies of the books should be returned to the Council within three weeks of the end of the series. It is preferable for all the books to be returned together, rather than after each session. You can use any shipping method you like to return the books.
- If you are missing copies of any of the books contact the Council immediately.

- A participant evaluation form is available on our website. Please print, copy and distribute this form to participants at the last session. *Collect the forms before participants leave the last session.* These forms can be returned with the Council-supplied books or separately, but the Council should receive them within three weeks of the end of the series.
- A host organization evaluation form is available on our website and can be submitted online. The information you give us in this form, along with the information from the participant evaluations, is crucial to the on-going success of this program. Complete this form within three weeks of the end of the series.