



## Poetry Express Host Guide

**Mission:** Connecting communities through poetry and performance as a catalyst for deeper engagement with things that matter.

Poetry Express is a collaborative poetry performance program that enables organizations and individuals to bring their community together.

Selected applicants are awarded two workshops with a prominent Maine poet for community members to write and/or practice performing poems. Program hosts convene and present a stellar community poetry performance for their broader community.

### Terminology

**Prominent Maine Poet:** A Maine poet selected by MHC to teach workshops and lead the poetry performance.

**Community Performers:** Community members from the region or organization who want to write or read poetry for the performance.

**Host:** The individual or organization awarded who will hold the event, invite Community Performers, and gather audience members.

### For Hosts

So, you're bringing your community together around important themes and issues through poetry? You've come to the right place!

The Host's responsibilities include:

- Bring community performers together for 2 workshops with a prominent Maine poet.
- Gather an audience for the poetry performance.
- Handle logistics – emailing community performers to gather, connecting with the venue or working to coordinate registration for your in-person, online, or hybrid event.

## **For Community Performers**

So, you've been asked to be a community performer at Poetry Express? How exciting!

Whether you've never read poetry before or you're a writer yourself, this is an excellent opportunity to work with a prominent Maine poet on writing and reading. In preparation for the performance, community performers will attend two workshops with a prominent Maine poet where you'll:

- **Read poetry from Maine writers**
- **Write your own poems**
- **Share your poems with your fellow performers**

After the workshops, you'll be ready to share at the Poetry Express event with an audience of supporters and poetry enthusiasts in your community.

"I didn't expect to feel so empowered to express myself, which was terrifying and nice. I was really deeply scared in my body to do it, but I wanted to and this was a really safe and nurturing space to be working through my feels." - Participant, 2022

## **For Prominent Maine Poets**

You've been selected to be our prominent Maine poet at one of our Poetry Express events this year. We are so excited to work with you!

For this program, you will:

- Host two workshops with community performers to prepare them for the event
- Lead the event! This might include deciding the order of the performers and acting as the emcee.
- We want to feature you as a poet if you so wish, so this might also include sharing an extended set list of your own poetry.

Poets are typically paid \$600 and are compensated for travel.

## What does Poetry Express look like?

After gathering community performers, participating in two workshops with a prominent Maine poet, and gathering an audience for your event, here's how it might look:

- The host gives opening remarks
  - Tell the audience why you gathered and a little about your theme.
  - Introduce the prominent Maine poet

Example intro:

Welcome, everyone! I'm so excited to see everyone here at the [INSERT EVENT TITLE], a Poetry Express event made possible by the Maine Humanities Council. I'm [NAME AND WHO YOU ARE]. Today, you'll hear from community members who wrote and read poems with our prominent Maine poet, [POETS NAME]. [POETS BIO]. We are so thankful to have them here. Now I'll pass the mic to our first poet.

- The host or the prominent Maine poet may introduce the community performers.
- Let the community performers share their poetry
- The prominent Maine poet may share their poems after the community performers.
- After poems have been shared, we like the audience to be involved in some form of discussion. Most Poetry Express events have ended with a short Q&A, facilitated by the host and/or prominent Maine poet. Others have had moments for discussion sprinkled throughout the event. Choose what's best for your community!
- Finally, you should ask for feedback from the audience, either via our surveys or something more creative. Maybe a posterboard with sticky notes or slips of paper to put into a jar. Some Poetry Express events provided prompts on slips of paper to later form into a collective poem. Choose what's best for you!

## Want to keep the conversation going?

Like our other programs, Poetry Express often energizes participants, hosts, and communities to continue the discussion after the event. In fact, MHC encourages all of those involved in Poetry Express to use this program as a springboard into other humanities projects. Apply to host a Discussion Project or Maine Speaks event or apply for a grant to help fund your own project. Let Sampson know if you're looking for other ways to engage your community.

## Poetry Express Check List

- ☐ Event Title:
- ☐ Date and Time:
- ☐ Location:
- ☐ Description (for marketing):
- ☐ Registration:
- ☐ Poet:
- ☐ Poet Bio:

### Community Performers Info

Name	Pronouns	Email

Workshop 1:

- ☐ Date/Time/Location:
- ☐ Attendance:

Workshop 2:

- ☐ Date/Time/Location:
- ☐ Attendance:

Event:

- ☐ Attendance in person:
- ☐ Attendance online:

Did you share/fill out our surveys? Find them in our [toolkit!](#)

Did you fill out our in/kind form? Find it in our [toolkit!](#)