



REVOLUTION NJ
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



An Overview of Goals and Priorities
November 2020

Table of Contents

Project Summary	3
<i>Revolution NJ</i> Mission Statement	4
What is <i>Revolution NJ</i> ?	4
Summary of Goals	5
Goals, Priorities, and Strategies	
Goal #1: <i>Tell a diverse and inclusive story about America's past that invites participation from all New Jerseyans.</i>	6
Goal #2: <i>Encourage the growth of organizational capacity at the state's history organizations so that they are better able to attract, engage, and serve visitors, both during and after Revolution NJ.</i>	8
Goal #3: <i>Promote heritage tourism in and to New Jersey to increase its positive impact on economic and community development.</i>	11
Goal #4: <i>Elevate the value placed on history education in our K-12 schools and universities.</i>	13
Goal #5: <i>Demonstrate how understanding the complexity of our history helps us to respond to the present and prepare for the future.</i>	15
Goal #6: <i>Increase public and private funding for history in New Jersey.</i>	16
Appendix: Ten Key Findings from the Community Listening Sessions	18

Project Summary

***Revolution NJ* will engage diverse audiences in exploring New Jersey's role in America's history, drawing lessons from the past to apply to the present and future.**

Premised on the principle that the questions people faced on the eve of the American Revolution remain pertinent today, New Jersey's commemoration of the 250th anniversary of independence will offer a platform for **New Jerseyans to consider the ideals that drove the Revolution and the implications they have for today's society.**

During the spring of 2019, *Revolution NJ's* partner agencies, the New Jersey Historical Commission and Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, hired the New Jersey-based consulting firm Creative Capacity to facilitate a process to determine how the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution should be acknowledged in our state. A joint meeting of the organizations' leadership and staff members was held in June 2019, and an initial draft strategic framework was developed based on the results of that session.

Creative Capacity then conducted a series of seven community listening sessions, designed to be the first round of community feedback during the years of preparation for the 250th. Community groups involved in this initial round of listening sessions included County Cultural and Heritage Professionals, American Revolutionary War Enthusiasts, Social Studies Educators, Public History Professionals, and members of the African-American, South Asian, and Muslim-American communities. The first six sessions were held between September 2019 and February 2020, with the seventh delayed to June 2020 by the pandemic. Content from these sessions was used to refine the plan draft. *Revolution NJ* intends to schedule more community listening sessions as project planning and preparation continues over the next few years.

This document is designed to serve as a strategic framework to guide continued planning, especially as external circumstances change between now and the public-facing aspects of *Revolution NJ*. Goals and priorities indicate areas of key focus. Initial strategies outline the work that is likely to be undertaken to plan for and execute a meaningful commemoration.

The strategic framework reflected in this document is **not a traditional strategic plan**. Rather, it highlights the key areas where *Revolution NJ* intends to have an impact through collaborating with many different groups to develop scholarship, ideas, programs, public visibility, and funding. It is an ambitious agenda, reflecting what was heard in the listening sessions and intended to generate support for the 250th over the next few years. As the initial preparatory work is completed and funding is secured, the framework will be refined.

The ideals of liberty, equality, and self-government inspired those who supported the American Revolution. The historical record reveals the complexities in trying to define and achieve these ideals, which have been realized for some and not for others over time. **The overall vision of this initiative is to explore all aspects of this history, acknowledging that an understanding of our past is an essential guide on our journey together toward the "more perfect union" pursued by people in America for the past 250 years.**

Revolution NJ Mission Statement

Revolution NJ will advance the role that history plays in public discourse, community engagement, education, tourism, and scholarship in New Jersey. Through a series of initiatives that explore the history of the American Revolution, its context, and its legacy, *Revolution NJ* will galvanize diverse audiences statewide into embracing the enduring value and relevance of history.

What Is Revolution NJ?

Revolution NJ is a partnership between the New Jersey Historical Commission, a State agency, and the nonprofit organization Crossroads of the American Revolution Association to advance the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in New Jersey.

Revolution NJ is designed to:

- Provide a statewide framework that will encourage synergy between the many aspects of the commemoration.
- Support organizations all over the state in preparing for, planning, and executing initiatives that will support the goals of the commemoration.
- Originate relevant programs and inspire grassroots participation in the commemoration, encouraging history organizations, schools, civic groups, Counties, municipalities, and others to generate programs and events.

The strategic framework outlined in this document provides a high-level view of *Revolution NJ's* aspirations at this early stage of planning.

Summary of Strategic Goals

Goal #1: Tell a diverse and inclusive story about America's past that invites participation from all New Jerseyans.

Goal #2: Encourage the growth of organizational capacity at New Jersey's history organizations so that they are better able to attract, engage, and serve visitors, both during and after *Revolution NJ*.

Goal #3: Promote heritage tourism in and to New Jersey to increase its positive impact on economic and community development.

Goal #4: Elevate the value placed on history education in our K-12 schools and universities.

Goal #5: Demonstrate how understanding the complexity of our history helps us to respond to the present and prepare for the future.

Goal #6: Increase public and private funding for history in New Jersey.

Goal #1: Tell a diverse and inclusive story about America’s past that invites participation from all New Jerseyans.

Priorities:

- Increase the capacity of New Jersey’s history organizations to explore a fuller view of the state’s history, including those elements that have often been under- or misrepresented in the past.
- Increase the diversity of the people engaging with history to better reflect our state’s demographics, including diversifying the leadership, staff, and volunteers of New Jersey history organizations, the visitorship of historic sites and museums, and the participants in history scholarship and programs.
- Expand resources and funding for history organizations to conduct community outreach to engage and serve underrepresented audiences in meaningful and sustainable ways.
- Improve the accuracy and quality of historical interpretation statewide, especially in terms of inclusivity, relevance, and accessibility.
- Initiate and encourage programs that explore the full scope of US history before, during, and after the Revolution, highlighting its relevance to contemporary issues.

Strategy #1: Actively diversify the leadership, partners, and staff of *Revolution NJ*, as well as board, staff, and volunteers at history organizations around the state.

- Prioritize recruiting of candidates of different backgrounds for the leadership of the New Jersey Historical Commission and the Crossroads of the American Revolution Association. Ensure that all bodies in the *Revolution NJ* governance structure represent a range of perspectives and backgrounds, with an emphasis on including and elevating underrepresented voices.¹
- Ensure that *Revolution NJ* and associated history organizations are welcoming places for people of varied gender, racial, ethnic, and religious identities, sexual orientations, abilities, national origins, and socio-economic backgrounds to work.
- Provide training to history organizations that will help them to successfully recruit, on-board, and support leaders, staff, and volunteers from diverse backgrounds.
- Engage members of younger generations with history organizations, by developing work-study, intern, and volunteer positions and creating partnerships, such as between local high schools and historical societies.
- Develop a program to connect Black, Indigenous, and other people of color to internships at history organizations and sites.

¹ Language that describes identity is complex and dynamic. This list is meant to indicate *Revolution NJ*'s commitment to engaging people of varied identities and staying current with best practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list, and language will be updated as needed to align with these standards.

Strategy #2: Support research that will lead to new scholarship on New Jersey’s history, especially elements that have often been under- or misrepresented in the past.

- Revise existing New Jersey Historical Commission grant guidelines and develop new grant programs to incentivize inclusive scholarship on New Jersey history.
- Partner with college and university history departments working on innovative historical scholarship to support their work and develop programs for sharing it with the public.
- Develop programs, such as lecture series or conferences, that offer members of the general public greater access to scholars actively investigating under- and untold aspects of New Jersey history.
- Diversify New Jersey Historical Commission members and staff, and fill or create new positions and working groups to further inclusive scholarship.

Strategy #3: Provide training and resources to history sites and museums to help them support anti-racist practices and integrate diverse and inclusive content into their own interpretation.

- Create professional development training sessions with experts on topics including but not limited to audience-centered programming, interpretive planning, impact frameworks, inclusive interpretation, accessibility, reading sources “against the grain,” decolonization, community engagement, and rapid response collecting (the gathering of ephemera/assets reflective of historic events as they unfold or immediately thereafter).
- Develop digital resources in the areas above to support ongoing enhancements of the visitor experience at sites around the state.
- Develop programs to motivate and support attendance by New Jersey history professionals at the annual meetings of nationally regarded professional networks such as the National Council on Public History, the American Association for State and Local History, the American Historical Association, and the Organization of American Historians.
- Disseminate a *Revolution NJ* interpretive framework that actively supports the development of inclusive, accurate, nuanced content.

Strategy #4: Invest in helping history organizations build connections to new audiences.

- Encourage public history sites to offer opportunities for members of New Jersey’s diverse population to truly “see themselves” at the site, developing strategies for sharing a wider range of history content so that visitors can better relate to the stories told.
- Create opportunities to explore the concept of “liberty and justice for all,” as it continues to evolve throughout American history.
- Create opportunities to connect American Revolutionary era history to other historical events worldwide (e.g., other countries’ experiences with colonialism, the history of immigration, recent protest movements) that will catch the interest of new audiences and encourage them to participate.
- Provide encouragement and training in assessing existing content to determine what must be revised or removed.

Goal #2: Encourage the growth of organizational capacity at New Jersey’s history organizations so that they are better able to attract, engage, and serve visitors, both during and after *Revolution NJ*.

Priorities:

- Support the training of staff, board members, and volunteers at historic sites and history organizations in best practices of historical research and interpretation as well as visitor readiness and customer service.
- Increase the number of active caretakers of and advocates for New Jersey historic sites.
- Promote the development and adoption of innovative history offerings that will engage diverse audiences at New Jersey historic sites and history organizations.
- Support capital improvements to secure the long-term preservation of buildings and landscapes.
- Support and encourage the development of collections to better represent a fuller spectrum of New Jersey history, including the experiences of people of varied gender, racial, ethnic, and religious identities, sexual orientations, abilities, national origins, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Invest in the conservation, stewardship, interpretation of, and public access to historic collections.

Strategy #1: Provide ongoing best practices training to staff, board, and volunteers of history sites and organizations.

- Emphasize strategies for increasing diversity and inclusivity in interpretation and visitor welcome.
- Share emerging trends in visitor engagement and interpretation.
- Offer resources to assist history organizations in major and minor revision projects.
- Provide training, resources, and tools to help history organizations make their organizational structures and practices more inclusive.

Strategy #2: Build site capacity to plan and deliver programs that are interactive, historically accurate, inclusive, accessible, and engaging.

- Lead by example: the New Jersey Historical Commission and Crossroads of the American Revolution, along with any *Revolution NJ* programs and content, will evaluate their existing work for revision and commit to the goals and interpretive framework in creating new content.
- Develop grants to support programs and projects aligned with the *Revolution NJ* goals and interpretive framework.
- Provide support for conducting evaluations to learn about visitors’ needs and interests, as well as about audiences that are not currently engaged.
- Build bridges between public history, history, and American Studies departments at universities and history organizations that help to create partnerships and collaborative funding opportunities.

Strategy #3: Provide support for capital and preservation projects to protect historic buildings and landscapes.

- Partner with key agencies and organizations to galvanize interest in historic preservation as part of marking the anniversary.
- Collaborate with the New Jersey Historic Trust and counties that offer support for historic preservation to advance projects.
- Encourage counties throughout New Jersey to support historic preservation through funding, incentives, and technical support.
- Collaborate with municipalities and nonprofit organizations to encourage the preservation of historic structures and landscapes that are currently unprotected.
- Connect historic preservation work with environmental stewardship programs through state, federal, County, and private programs.
- Develop private support for historic preservation projects.

Strategy #4: Use the interpretive framework as a guide for developing programming that resonates with a wide range of audiences.

- Define guiding questions, key themes, suggested narratives, and intended audience learning objectives that will create pathways for engagement.
- Develop programs that explore thought-provoking questions and invite critical analysis about the American Revolution and its relevance to New Jersey and our nation today.
- Bring forth the questions, themes, and narratives that have been excluded from dominant narratives of the past – including stories of African Americans, Native Americans, and women, questions about land and water, the divisive nature of the American Revolution, and the social and cultural history of the Revolutionary era.
- Develop research and interpretive content that addresses themes connecting the Revolutionary era to present-day issues, including questions of inclusion and exclusion, property and sovereignty, the “Revolutionary ideals,” representation and participation, movement of people, New Jersey as a “battleground,” and the historical process itself.
- Emphasize serving audiences of diverse professional experiences, including: active military and veterans, graduate students, emerging professionals, educators, arts and history professionals, business leaders, advocacy workers, and more.

Strategy #5: Invest in the expansion and stewardship of collections.

- Offer training on collection-building strategies, including best practices in areas of inclusivity and decolonization.
- Promote clear processes to help connect sites, collectors, and people who may not think of themselves as collectors but who hold items of historical value.
- Coordinate with public libraries, local historical societies, and other community organizations to increase public awareness of the value of donating archival collections, personal ephemera, and historical objects.

Strategy #6: Develop programs and provide resources that illuminate the historical process itself and explore the opportunities and limitations that accompany commemoration and anniversaries.

- Use the *Revolution NJ* interpretive framework to guide programs and inspire others to develop content actively questioning how historical narratives are crafted and by whom.
- Develop programs and content that encourage questioning of what is gained and what is lost by the act of commemoration—an interpretive choice in its own right—inviting audiences to question the implications of “starting” the story at 1776.

Goal #3: Promote heritage tourism in and to New Jersey to increase its positive impact on economic and community development.

Priorities:

- Increase visitation at the state’s heritage tourism sites.
 - Increase the capacity of heritage tourism destinations to reach new audiences and provide an inclusive, welcoming experience.
 - Facilitate the development of sustained partnerships between historic sites and tourism industry partners.
 - Support the development of heritage tourism infrastructure that interprets historical events in locations where sites have been lost to development and other causes, especially in urban areas.
 - Demonstrate and increase the economic value brought to the state by heritage tourism.
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Strategy #1: Use the *Revolution NJ* interpretive framework to help build themed heritage trails that encourage visitation.

- Encourage sites to collaborate around opening hours and events to make the trails more valuable and accessible to visitors.
- Use the *Revolution NJ* interpretive framework to help devise routes and connections between sites that will resonate with varied audiences.
- Update existing and create new markers and interpretive content on roads, walkways, and trails that explore the history of different sites and people through an inclusive lens.

Strategy #2: Increase the visibility and accessibility of historic sites in their communities.

- Improve directional and interpretive signage, especially in areas of inclusivity, accessibility, and relevance.
- Invest in improvements that make sites easier to visit (parking, restrooms, bus turnarounds, ADA compliance, etc.).
- Consider strategies for making historic sites more accessible to people who do not own cars.
- Interpret the “absence”: develop signage that interprets places of significance that have been lost, destroyed, or neglected, increasing the quantity, quality, and profile of Revolutionary historic sites in New Jersey.

Strategy #3: Invest in marketing that will drive visitation from a broader spectrum of the population.

- Define market segments and conduct market research to determine the benefits and drawbacks of various messaging, media sources, and potential influencers.
- Identify potential new ‘selling points’ or activity offerings for historic sites and events, recognizing that new visitors may be attracted to features beyond the interpretation currently offered at the site.

Strategy #4: Position New Jersey’s Revolutionary-era resources as assets that can help drive economic activity and job creation in local communities, regionally, and statewide.

- Build strong working relationships with the State Chamber of Commerce, the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, and county business development offices to drive potential business/historic site partnerships, including corporate sponsorships, business counsel, and volunteer programming opportunities.
- Increase opportunities to promote Revolutionary sites as tourist attractions by fostering relationships with local Special Improvement Districts, regional Destination Marketing Organizations, and other tourism partners.
- Develop familiarization tours, training, and processes to encourage cross-promotion between the businesses/hospitality industry and historic sites.
- Conduct research/evaluation to learn from communities themselves about how *Revolution NJ* programs could help bolster economic activity and support their needs.

Strategy #5: Position historic sites as central to community life by developing new models that help sites envision new ways of interacting with their communities.

- Develop models that drive local tourism – local residents who visit and then appreciate their own local history, develop community pride, and understand the value of supporting historic sites.
- Enable heritage tourism sites to fulfill community roles, hosting (for example): summer cooling centers, community collecting and curating opportunities, cultural festivals, starting points for fundraising 5K runs, etc.

Goal #4: Elevate the value placed on history education in our K-12 schools and universities.

Priorities:

- Increase both the quantity and the quality of history education in New Jersey by addressing the needs demonstrated by the New Jersey History Census and other evaluations.
 - Increase the direct contact that students have with historic sites, museums, and primary resources.
 - Increase the use of New Jersey's history collections (sites, landscapes, objects, documents) in education.
 - Increase public understanding of how history education prepares students for civic engagement and fosters workforce readiness, including in areas such as critical thinking, media literacy, researching primary and secondary sources, synthesizing information, and forming evidence-based interpretations.
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Strategy #1: Support the development of online resources that can be easily used in classrooms.

- Work with diverse classroom and museum educators to build teaching resources around primary resources that align with the student learning standards.
- Organize content produced by history organizations into a central resource that can be easily used by educators to supplement their teaching.

Strategy #2: Promote history sites, organizations, and museums to schools and universities.

- Advocate for the value of direct experiences with historic sites and collections to enhance students' understanding of history.
- Distribute high quality virtual content produced by history organizations.
- Work with university history departments on collaborative programs linking their research and interests with the needs of broader audiences.

Strategy #3: Increase the public value placed on historical skills such as critical thinking, media literacy, researching primary and secondary sources, synthesizing information, and forming evidence-based arguments.

- Work with organizations like the History Relevance Campaign to develop programs and communications advocating for the value of history and historical skills.
- Consider communications strategies for revising the way history is discussed and understood by history organizations and the public.
- Work with programs such as New Jersey History Day to further demonstrate the value of historical skills.

Strategy #4: Support improvements to K-12 social studies curricula and in college and university history departments.

- Work with the New Jersey Council for the Social Studies, NJ Department of Education, and other relevant networks to determine and promote effective refinements to existing methods and content.

Strategy #5: Change public perceptions about the viability of history education for successful professional life.

- Build on and distribute existing resources from the American Historical Association, National Council on Public History, Organization of American Historians, and other organizations showing that history education leads to similar financial outcomes as STEM studies.
- Highlight the ways in which history education offers valuable skills for both employment and civic life, such as analyzing conflicting evidence, solving complex problems, and understanding information in its interpersonal and cultural context (to paraphrase the words of [#WeAreHumanistic](#), a coalition of history, humanities, and cultural organizations).
- Reaffirm existing internship programs or help develop new ones that place students at history sites and organizations for meaningful professional experiences.

Goal #5: Demonstrate how understanding the complexity of our history helps us to respond to the present and prepare for the future.

Priorities:

- Build a widely adopted interpretive framework that demonstrates how the themes of the Revolutionary War era resonate today, accompanied by a robust set of programs and events aligned with the framework and its learning objectives.
 - Increase the range of interpretative content and formats presented at most historic sites and history organizations to reflect the fundamentally complex nature of history – how fights for freedom and equality have coexisted with oppression and injustice.
 - Increase public understanding of how historical narratives are made, demonstrating that the stories we tell about the past result from people making choices about what to include and exclude, how to sequence and frame that information, and which sources to use to support their interpretations.
 - Increase history-related skills such as critical thinking and media literacy among the general public.
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Strategy #1: Use the *Revolution NJ* interpretive framework to support the design of history programs with a more inclusive, nuanced understanding of the past, present, and future.

- Develop programs that take into account ambiguity, contingency, agency, hindsight, and nuance in developing historical narratives.
- Be transparent in all programs about the historical process as a series of interpretive choices, directly exploring the role and value of commemoration and anniversaries in our society.
- Use the interpretive framework's Guiding Questions and Key Themes to develop and support programs that invite people to take what they have learned about the American Revolution and apply it to what they understand about America now and hope to see in America in the future.

Strategy #2: Develop communications materials and programs directly tied to current events

- Produce online materials promoted through social media that highlight the relevance of history to current political, cultural, economic, and social issues.
- Create conferences or lecture series focused on themes that connect pressing contemporary issues with Revolutionary-era topics.
- Create a communications plan that highlights opportunities to link *Revolution NJ* content and programs with current events—especially in areas that may be unexpected, such as environmental and public health debates.
- Work with history organizations not focused on the Revolution to find programmatic entry points into *Revolution NJ* that will expand the public's understanding of the initiative's relevance.

Goal #6: Increase public and private funding for history in New Jersey.

Priorities:

- Increase the number of people and organizations who will regularly fund New Jersey history organizations and projects in the long-term.
 - Secure funding to execute projects identified in the Capital Needs Assessment.
 - Increase ongoing state funding of history programs.
 - Develop innovative funding models and diverse donor bases to support ongoing history efforts in New Jersey.
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Strategy #1: Form a Campaign Council to lead fundraising efforts for *Revolution NJ*.

- Establish goals for the Campaign Council that will help shape its objectives and inform member recruitment.
- Develop a timeline for the Campaign Council's formation, considering the hardship many face from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Leverage the expertise of New Jersey Historical Commission and Crossroads of the American Revolution Association leadership, the *Revolution NJ* Advisory Council, and the *Revolution NJ* Steering Committee to suggest potential members and broker connections.

Strategy #2: Research and cultivate potential individual, corporate, and foundation donors.

- Seek out funders who might not traditionally support history projects, but could be engaged by efforts to support diverse and inclusive scholarship and programs.
- Research innovative fundraising models, including grassroots campaigns.
- Form teams to spearhead fundraising initiatives aimed at different *Revolution NJ* goals.

Strategy #3: Secure grant funding from federal programs and private foundations.

- Secure federal funding that is made available to state-level organizations to support initiatives related to the 250th.
- Research private foundations with an interest in history, as well as those interested in priorities related to Revolutionary War-era themes such as leadership.
- Research private foundations with a particular commitment to investing in New Jersey.
- Seek out connections from the Campaign Council and other supporters that would open doors to new funding opportunities.
- Cultivate the new private funding relationships formed during this process to increase their interest in supporting New Jersey history organizations once the 250th is completed.

Strategy #4: Advocate for public funding of history organizations, based on their positive impact on local economies, education, and community engagement.

- Measure the positive impact of history organizations to support the return on investment of public funding.
- Develop a Campaign Council with a deep capacity for advocacy.

Strategy #5: Test different models that could provide sustainable support to New Jersey history organizations.

- Support the development of funding collaboratives that work together to raise shared funds.
- Advocate for major New Jersey foundation and corporate funders to include history projects and organizations in their funding priorities.
- Cultivate continued giving from *Revolution NJ* donors to ongoing history efforts, building relationships between history organizations and these new supporters.

Appendix: Ten Key Findings from the First Round of Community Listening Sessions

This list represents the most common themes in the feedback shared over the course of the first seven community listening sessions conducted to inform planning for *Revolution NJ*.

1. Knowledge of the American Revolution Varies Widely

- There was confusion in several community groups between the American Revolution and the Civil War. History professionals reported that this confusion is common among general visitors. Promotion of the 250th should avoid assuming that people have any prior understanding of history of the American Revolution, and 250th programs should integrate educational content about the history, events, and significance of the Revolution.

2. Meet People Where They Are

- Participants held a wide range of perspectives on the American Revolution – seeing it as everything from an inspiring example of freedom to an event that embodies the hypocrisy of racial injustice that persists to this day. In order to engage a wide audience for the 250th, programs should address this broad range of perspectives and the tensions among them.

3. Prioritize Diverse and Inclusive Leadership, Scholarship, and Programs

- Across groups, participants wanted to see diverse leadership for the 250th. While all forms of diversity were seen as important, racial and age diversity were most frequently mentioned. Absent diverse leadership (including in the *Revolution NJ* governance structure and among funders, partners, and stewards of history sites and organizations), participants suggested that efforts to engage diverse audiences would not be successful.
- Focusing scholarship, curriculum development, programs, and events on telling a more diverse and inclusive story was considered critical, both for serving new audiences and for generating new, more accurate knowledge that will have long-term value. This work was also seen as an important potential legacy of the efforts of the 250th.

4. Make *Revolution NJ*'s Public Efforts Relevant – to All Audiences

- Across groups, participants expressed the sense that the American Revolution lacks relevance to many people today. A successful 250th will have to demonstrate why people should be interested in this history.
- Numerous ideas were shared about how to make this history relevant, including:
 - Committing to a truthful account of history – avoiding “whitewashing,” exploring the reality of the “Founding Fathers” as enslavers, and investigating how “liberty and justice for all” has failed to play out over our history as a nation.
 - Including the narratives, voices, and perspectives of people of varied races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, nationalities, and socio-economic backgrounds.
 - Using today’s formats to connect with today’s audiences. Traditional interpretive tools like signage and markers were considered to be a useful starting point, especially in marking the location of historic events where no physical site remains. However, participants stressed

that historical markers alone are not enough to catch people's interest and engage diverse audiences. Public programming and interpretive tools should consider the formats that audiences are most likely to respond to – which may even be different in 2026 than today.

- Attracting young people as interpreters, docents, and guides. Internship programs for high school and college students were suggested.

5. Make Public Programs and Historic Sites Interactive

- Each group talked about *interacting* with history, as opposed to *visiting*, *learning*, or even *understanding*.
- People described interactivity in many ways, from great docents and first-person oral history to immersive experiences and fun events to QR codes and audio guides. There are many options, but “*just visiting*” generally was not appealing to people.
- People also expressed a desire for history programming that is more conceptually interactive – challenging, thought provoking, inviting critical thinking – rather than passive and predictable experiences.

6. Build the Capacity of Historic Sites and History Organizations

- All of the groups that included history professionals and enthusiasts wanted to see capacity-building support for local sites and history organizations, especially smaller ones. Investment in strengthening sites should take place before any major programs marketed as part of the 250th are launched for the public, to ensure program quality.
- Capacity-building ideas included recruiting and training for docents and volunteers, new funding streams, capital improvements, shared program development, and audience engagement tools.
- Some particularly referenced the training needed for staff and volunteers in areas of inclusive interpretation, making sites relevant to today's audiences, increasing accessibility, community engagement, and serving diverse audiences.

7. Create New Audiences for History

- Across all of the listening sessions, connecting people with history was a prominent theme. There was a strong feeling that people of all ages and backgrounds don't appreciate history enough, as evidenced by the lack of visitation to historic sites, lack of engagement in social studies courses in schools and colleges/universities, and lack of financial support for history sites and scholarship.
- Participants across groups felt that history has not always been told in a complete and factual way that reflects all of the people involved. The 250th was seen as a unique opportunity to create new scholarship and interpretation, opening a wider perspective on the events of America's past in ways that make it more accurate, nuanced, and compelling to our state's diverse population.
- In several groups, participants expressed that absent this focus on diversifying audiences, the effort of the 250th would not be worth the investment.

8. Promote New Jersey as a Historic Destination

- Lack of attention to New Jersey’s role in history came up in several contexts – heritage tourism, K–12 education, relevance to diverse audiences, and telling a fuller and more accurate story of the past.
- An enhanced focus on New Jersey – its role in the Revolution, its rich local history, and the diverse population here both then and now – may help build engagement.

9. Make It Big, and Make It Last

- History professionals and enthusiasts are hoping for the 250th to be a major undertaking with major impact.
- Participants sought big events, significant marketing, new history scholarship, capital improvements and capacity building for historic sites, and new ways of interpreting history that are inclusive of the diverse people who participated in that history.
- Many alluded to a desire to see the 250th result in mindset and/or behavior shifts among the public, whether in the form of greater civic engagement, a deeper understanding of how the past pertains to the present, a grasp of history’s complexity, and increased capacity for critical thinking and empathy.
- Investments that were likely to create lasting impact were considered the most valuable ways to mark the 250th.

10. Set Expectations for the State’s Leadership

- The history community had strong expectations of “the State’s” leadership role in the 250th.
- People’s perceptions of effective leadership took many forms, including:
 - Be the mechanism that brings people together.
 - Demonstrate diverse leadership – *“If state committees and groups are not diverse, no one will take you seriously.”*
 - Provide guidance about what is needed to enhance history sites and offer support to help staff and volunteers prepare for new ways of interacting with visitors.
 - *“Tell people what they have to stop doing.”* People asked the State to find ways to move sites away from practices like poorly trained tour guides and inaccurate historical interpretation.
 - Create mandates that will increase participation – for example, *“all schools must participate.”* Secure and distribute funding. *“Without money, it’s all shot.”*