

# National Historical Publications and Records Commission Strategic Plan - 2021

Through its National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the National Archives plays a catalytic role in increasing public access to historical records collections in repositories across the United States.

The NHPRC program of grants and initiatives supports:

- Publishing historical records collections
- Access to archival collections
- Collaborations
- Public engagement
- Professional development

As the nation's archives, repositories, and historical records collections are engaged in dynamic ways of redefining practices and new directions for preservation, access, and publishing, the NHPRC has adopted this new Strategic Plan.

The goals and objectives stem from both long-standing grants programs as well as the realities of a changing field. The NHPRC will continue its function within the National Archives to collaborate with other Federal agencies, state governments and private funders in support of preservation and access. We support the work of historians, documentary editors, archivists, and records managers and we look to ways in which they might collaborate, share best practices and resources, and broaden diversity within the profession and within their collections. We also wish to tap into the growing public interest in historical records.

## Mission

*The National Historical Publications and Records Commission provides opportunities for the American people to discover and use records to broaden public understanding of our democracy, history, and culture.*

## **Goal One: Expand public discovery and use of the nation's historical records.**

*Strategy:* The Commission will support projects to process and publish historical records collections.

### *Objectives:*

- Broadened preservation and discovery of diverse historical records collections
- Collaborations for the virtual unification of records from multiple repositories
- Collaborations to create replicable and sustainable digital platforms for historical records collections
- Free online collections that allow for re-use and analysis

### *Tactics:*

1. Identify new and better ways to promote the *Access to Historical Records* grants program to encourage:
  - *Major Initiatives:* for innovative and collaborative approaches to address significant collections or fieldwide challenges.
  - *Archives Projects:* for processing collections and publishing online finding aids and fully searchable collections.
2. Foster a new generation of collaborative digital editions in African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, and Native American history.

## **Goal Two: Foster a greater diversity of voices in telling the American story through historical records collections.**

**Strategy:** The Commission will assist projects in small and underserved communities and within the archival and historical editing professions to represent the full diversity of the American story.

### **Objectives:**

- Greater diversity and inclusion in all of our grant programs
- Greater diversity in archives, records management, and historical documentary editing professions
- A wider and more diverse pool of applicants from all areas of the country
- Better methods and tools designed specifically for smaller repositories and underserved communities

### **Tactics:**

1. Develop new communications and outreach strategies to actively promote all NHPRC programs to attract new, diverse applicants, particularly those working with historical records collections that center the voices and perspectives of African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans.
2. Support professional development and other opportunities for all NHPRC staff to better engage diverse communities.
3. Partner with state boards, state archives, or other organizations to target institutional advancement for small and underserved local archives and repositories, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and tribal entities.
4. Reduce the required cost share for the *Publishing Historical Records* program to 25 percent, to broaden participation among small and underserved institutions.
5. Support opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in professional development as archivists and producers of historical editions.

6. Offer workshops through a variety of sponsors – regional professional organizations, state boards, and others – to educate potential applicants about project design and the NHPRC application process
7. Seek out and recruit a more diverse and inclusive body of Commission members.

## **Goal Three: Connect the National Archives with the nation's archives.**

**Strategy:** As part of the National Archives, the Commission will partner with Federal agencies, state governments, and private foundations to strengthen the network of archives and documentary editing projects.

### ***Objectives:***

- Leverage resources of Federal funders and private foundations to support the field
- Stronger partnerships with state archives and historical records advisory boards
- Broadened fieldwide sharing of best practices, tools, and methodologies

### ***Tactics:***

1. Participate with other Federal agencies, other funders, and the field to address challenges associated with the long-term discovery and sustainability of digital resources.
2. Strengthen partnerships with state historical records advisory boards, including:
  - a. Public engagement with collections, processes, and outcomes
  - b. Collaborations involving small and underserved organizations
  - c. Professional development and training
3. Strengthen partnerships with state archives to make state and local government records more accessible
4. Organize and sponsor regular opportunities for project staff of NHPRC and staff of the National Archives to share best practices and new methods
5. Support programs to share findings on best practices, tools, and methodologies drawn from funded projects, professional associations, and other field practitioners

**Goal Four: Engage the American people in preserving and publishing historical records collections that tell the American story.**

*Strategy:* The Commission will support archives and digital edition projects to engage people in their communities to assist in processing and publishing online historical records collections.

*Objectives:*

- Public participation in the work of archives and collaborative digital editions
- More people sharing their knowledge about, and interest in, historical records
- Students educated in the discovery and use of authentic and reliable primary sources
- Citizens better able to preserve and share their own historical records

*Tactics:*

1. Identify new and better ways to promote the *Public Engagement with Historical Records* grant program to attract a broader range of projects.
2. Encourage all grantees to engage students and the broader public in the work of archives and collaborative digital editions.
3. Partner with state boards on local and statewide projects that enhance public participation and engagement in the work of archives.