

# NHPRC Strategic Plan

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) supports activities that provide access to historical records that tell the American story. The NHPRC supports publishing, preservation and access projects, research and development of best practices and new methodologies. These undertakings assist the National Archives in carrying out its [mission and goals](#).

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

Through collaboration with the National Archives, other Federal agencies, and private funders, the Commission seeks to enhance its national leadership role; continue its support of our partners in the states; fund preservation and access, historical documentary editions, and professional development and training; and expand programs that enhance public participation in preserving and using historical records collections.

## MISSION

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

## VISION

Through leadership initiatives, grants, and fostering the creation of new tools and methods, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission connects the work of the National Archives to the work of the nation's archives. The Commission acts as a bridge for innovation and creativity in advancing best archival practices, publishing historical records, and connecting citizens to their records.

## **Goal One: Connect the National Archives with the work of the nation's archives.**

*Strategy:* The Commission will provide national leadership in addressing core challenges, developing and promoting best practices, and building partnerships among the nation's vast network of archives and documentary editing projects.

### *Objectives:*

- Build national and state partnerships around key needs
- Support professional development opportunities for archivists and documentary editors
- Fund research, development, and dissemination of best practices, tools, and methodologies

### *Tactics:*

1. Develop and lead targeted national initiatives that convene archivists, editors, historians, publishers, librarians, and others to discuss critical issues, best practices, innovative tools, and methodologies in the publishing and stewardship of historical records collections. Initiatives will serve as collaborative efforts of the National Archives, other Federal funders, and the private sector. *Initial undertakings* will focus on:
  - a. new publishing methods, including digital documentary editions
  - b. digital records preservation and access, with an initial focus on email
  - c. partnerships between the states and the National Archives, including the role and capacity of state historical records advisory boards and state archives
  - d. public engagement with archives' collections, processes, and outcomes
2. Organize and sponsor regular opportunities for project staff of NHPRC grants and staff of the National Archives to share best practices and new methods to advance the field
3. Publish and disseminate findings on best practices, tools, and methodologies drawn from funded projects, authored by staff and others

## **Goal Two: Expand access to the nation's historical records.**

*Strategy:* The Commission will support innovative and collaborative projects in preserving, arranging, describing, and publishing collections of primary sources.

### *Objectives:*

- Broaden preservation of, and increased online access to, historical records collections
- Initiate collaborative projects leading to the long-term sustainability of digital resources
- Promote open access to collections to encourage re-use and analysis
- Support the development and use of standards for online publishing of historical records collections

### *Tactics:*

1. Combine the current Access, Digitization, and Electronic Records programs into a single Access program with a two-tiered annual cycle:
  - a. *Major Initiatives:* for innovative and collaborative approaches to address significant challenges. Grants would be limited to several large awards and require a 50 percent cost share. The initial application would be a three-page proposal, with an invitation to make a full application to a select set of applicants
  - b. *Archives Projects:* modest-sized grant awards to carry out preservation and access activities. Implement a reduced cost share (25%) to widen the applicant pool
2. Complete current documentary editions (print and online) and identify new projects to make historical records collections more widely accessible
3. Develop and sponsor national convenings (see also Goal One) to address challenges associated with primary sources, including long-term sustainability of digital resources, digital publishing standards, and open access to humanities-based work, among others
4. Support, where appropriate, the use of Creative Commons licenses, the building of APIs (application program interfaces), and other Open Access principles that promote use and re-use of collections and associated data

## **Goal Three: Engage the American people in preserving and discovering the American record.**

*Strategy:* The Commission will support activities that put the American people in touch with primary sources in their communities and online.

### *Objectives:*

- Encourage innovative methods for the public to share their knowledge about and interest in historical records
- Support efforts to train people of all ages in using primary source materials
- Partner with state boards on local and statewide projects that enhance public participation and engagement in the work of archives

### *Tactics:*

1. Promote education and training efforts led by archivists, editors, and records managers for the creation and use of innovative curriculum that advances public engagement with historic records
2. Identify needs for open source tools to help the public find fulfilling and useful ways to benefit from the increasing amount of digital resources in American history and culture
3. Offer regular forums for archival and documentary editing projects to share best practices in public engagement

## **Goal Four: Enhance the capacity of small and diverse organizations with historical records collections.**

*Strategy:* The Commission will promote the institutional advancement of organizations in underserved communities with historical records collections and assist locally-based repositories with training and tools to improve their stewardship abilities.

### *Objectives:*

- Encourage a wider pool of applicants
- Fund the creation of methods and tools designed for smaller repositories and underserved communities
- Partner with state boards, state archives, and other entities to advance the capacity of local institutions in their states

### *Tactics:*

1. Develop and lead a national initiative (see Goal One) to examine the collaborative role of state boards and state archives in identifying and meeting the needs of local archives and repositories
2. Partner with state boards, state archives, or other leading institutions to target institutional advancement for local archives and repositories
3. Streamline the application and review processes – reduce reviews to one panel comprised of peers and state board members; offer brief preliminary applications for some grant programs
4. Support and offer workshops through a variety of sponsors – regional professional organizations, State Boards, and others – to educate locally-based applicants about project design and the application process
5. Regularly survey applicants and potential applicants about NHPRC processes and programs