



# RevolutionNJ

1776 ★ 2026 | ENGAGE THE PAST. SHAPE THE FUTURE.

# HANDBOOK



A GUIDE FOR ENGAGING THE PAST  
AND SHAPING THE FUTURE

[WWW.REVNJ.ORG](http://WWW.REVNJ.ORG)

Version 1.0

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	• HOW TO USE
4	• OVERVIEW
6	• PROGRAM THEMES
24	• BRINGING REVOLUTIONNJ TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD
35	• PROGRAM IDEAS
42	• RESOURCES/ TOOLS/ GRANTS
47	• FAQ

*"In December 1776, it was in New Jersey where the American Revolution turned, and where the American Spirit was renewed."*

*Governor Phil Murphy  
Second Inaugural Address  
January 18, 2022*

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# HOW TO USE

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## WHY A HANDBOOK IS NECESSARY

As part of the initiative to commemorate the 250th founding of the United States, a number of organizations throughout the state will develop programs, events, and exhibits that explore the American Revolution and the broader 250-year history of our country.

The handbook is meant to help anyone who wants to take part in the RevolutionNJ initiative to engage diverse residents and visitors. Regardless of whether you are a historic site, civic group, small business, or an arts-based organization, there is a place for everyone to take part in the commemoration efforts leading up to the 250th.

*Note: The Handbook is a living document and will be updated as we get closer to the 250th.*

## GOALS

The 250th is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to advance the role that history plays in:

- public discourse,
- civic and community engagement,
- education,
- heritage tourism,
- economic development,
- scholarship,
- public programming and events throughout New Jersey.

It is our chance to think big and bold, to reimagine what is possible, and to leave a lasting legacy in the state for future generations.

## OVERVIEW

This handbook is separated into several sections. First, it provides an overview of RevolutionNJ, what it is, its broader goals, and why it is important. Second, it dives into the key interpretive themes exploring how organizations throughout the state can pull from them to shape programming for the 250th. Third, it explores how you can engage the public in meaningful partnerships. Fourth, it demonstrates examples of programming that would align with our goals. Lastly, it provides several resources and FAQs to help organizations join the RevolutionNJ initiative.

# OVERVIEW



## WHAT IS REVOLUTIONNJ?

- 250th Commemoration
- Mission
- Goals
- Themes



**RevolutionNJ**

ENGAGE THE PAST. SHAPE THE FUTURE.

## A SPECIAL WELCOME: COMMEMORATING THE 250TH AND BEYOND

By Sara Cureton, Executive Director of the New Jersey Historical Commission and Carrie Fellows, Executive Director of Crossroads of the American Revolution.

How do you feel about anniversaries? Are you excited about the opportunity to gather and celebrate? Are you worried about the work that goes along with preparing for these events? Do you wonder how friends and family will respond? Do you see them as invitations to consider how the events of the past continue to shape today and tomorrow? Or maybe you just wonder what all the fuss is about.

Common reactions, right? Preparing for the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States may provoke all of those reactions and more. But whether you like anniversaries or not, they do offer tremendous opportunities for reflection, new or renewed connections with others, and celebration. As we approach a significant milestone for all of us in the United States, we at RevolutionNJ want to provide you and the organizations you love with the tools to create the inclusive, impactful, and creative programs that your communities will remember for a lifetime. Whether you plan to create a public mural in your local library, commission a new play or musical composition, foster conversations around the ideals that informed the American Revolution, create a local history exhibition with students, or dedicate your annual Fourth of July activities and fireworks to the 250th, we hope this handbook and the many other tools we have created will help you plan the programs that will mean the most to your audiences.

As you move forward with planning, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at RevolutionNJ with questions and suggestions. And keep us posted on what you are planning—we want to help amplify your efforts around the state and the nation.

Looking forward to 2026 and beyond!



## Our Mission

RevolutionNJ 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, RevolutionNJ will galvanize diverse audiences statewide into embracing the enduring value and relevance of history.

## Our Goals

- 1) Tell a diverse and inclusive story about America's past that invites participation from all New Jerseyans.
- 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 RevolutionNJ.
- 3) Promote heritage tourism in and to New Jersey to increase its positive impact on economic and community development.
- 4) Elevate the value placed on history education in our K–12 schools and universities.
- 5) Demonstrate how understanding the complexity of our history helps us to respond to the present and prepare for the future.
- 6) Increase public and private funding for history in New Jersey.

# PROGRAM THEMES



*"History is not the past. It is the stories we tell about the past. How we tell these stories - triumphantly or self-critically, metaphysically or dialectally - has a lot to do with whether we cut short or advance our evolution as human beings."*

*- Grace Lee Boggs*

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# THEMES

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## SEVEN KEY THEMES

Prior to and after 1776, a number of common threads have shaped the American experience. Better understood as key themes, these ideas echo throughout time, creating a rich tapestry of interconnected people, places, and events. Through a number of listening sessions with community members and a scholar summit, the following seven themes reflect the collective history of New Jersey and the United States as a whole.

- Inclusion/Exclusion
- Revolutionary Ideals
- Political Participation
- Movement of People
- Property and Sovereignty
- New Jersey as a "Battleground"
- The Historical Process

For more about these themes and other resources, visit:

<https://www.revnj.org/resources>

## WHY USE THEMES

Creating a common approach centered around important ideas allows for a cohesive commemoration of the 250th. As part of our larger goal of creating an inclusive, diverse accounting of the last 250 years, a reflection on shared themes allows for healthy debate and exploration of our past to occur. It also provides a shorthand way for various organizations to connect with each other thematically across history, arts, businesses, and civic organizations.

### **NOTE:**

*These themes are not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive. Some organizations may gravitate towards a select number of themes. That is ok! The goal is to use the themes as a tool for asking questions you may not have considered as being central to your organization. Approach the themes with an open mind and heart and see what creative sparks may fly. You may be more connected to a theme than you think.*

# GUIDING QUESTIONS

*Before diving into the Interpretive Themes, the following Guiding Questions will help you ground your approach to the commemoration of the 250th. By reflecting on these questions, you will be better able to link the present with the past.*

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Was the American Revolution revolutionary?

Who did the American Revolution include and exclude?

What difference did the American Revolution make?

How does someone know they are living in a revolutionary moment?

How did New Jersey shape the American Revolution and how did the Revolution shape New Jersey?

Why learn about the American Revolution?

How do we know what we know about the past?

How is the story of the American Revolution told?

Who has shaped and will shape historical narratives and how?

Why commemorate the 250th anniversary, and what does it mean to me?

How do I want the past to shape the future?

How should future generations understand the past?

What will my role be in the ongoing American experiment?

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*After reflecting on these questions, you are now ready to explore the key themes we outlined for the 250th.*

*The themes encourage people of varied backgrounds, identities, experiences, and perspectives to find a way into the anniversary, and to consider it critically. We hope that the themes allow you to grow comfortable with the "messiness" of history, especially the process by which history is told, researched, and experienced.*

*Need more context? Check out our [Big Ideas Webinar Series](https://bit.ly/revnbigideas):  
<https://bit.ly/revnbigideas>*



# Themes and Keywords

Theme	Keywords
Inclusion/Exclusion	Race and ethnicity; indigeneity; gender; sexuality; ability; class; national origin
Property and Sovereignty	Nationhood; land and water; slavery and freedom; taxation; empire
"Revolutionary Ideals"	Liberty; pursuing happiness; equality; justice; self-determination
Political Participation	Representation; direct democracy; voting rights; civic engagement; census and gerrymandering; protest
Movement of People	Migration, immigration, displacement, slavery, local and global
New Jersey as a "Battleground"	Patriots, Loyalists, and other positions; elections; grassroots activism; civil war(s) and war zones; religion
The Historical Process	Origin myths; interpretive choices; collective memory; dominant narratives' agency, causality, and contingency; commemoration; "founding"

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Audiences of programs, events, and activities planned to mark the U.S. Semiquincentennial will . . .

- Grasp what happened in New Jersey during the Revolutionary era, in all its complexity, including commonly marginalized figures, themes, narratives, and events.
- Understand who was included and excluded in the stated ideals of the Revolution and how their lives changed—or did not.
- Connect the Revolutionary era and the present, learning to factor in historical contingencies and the benefits of hindsight when thinking about the past.
- Understand that people create historical narratives through a series of interpretive choices, with dominant narratives typically crafted by those in positions of power.
- Question the opportunities and limitations that come with commemorations and national origin myths.
- Use what they have learned about the American Revolution and the historical process to sharpen their own ideals and define how they hope to shape the future.

To explore these ideas more, check out our educator resources at:  
[www.rev.nj.org/educators](http://www.rev.nj.org/educators)

# Exclusion/ Inclusion

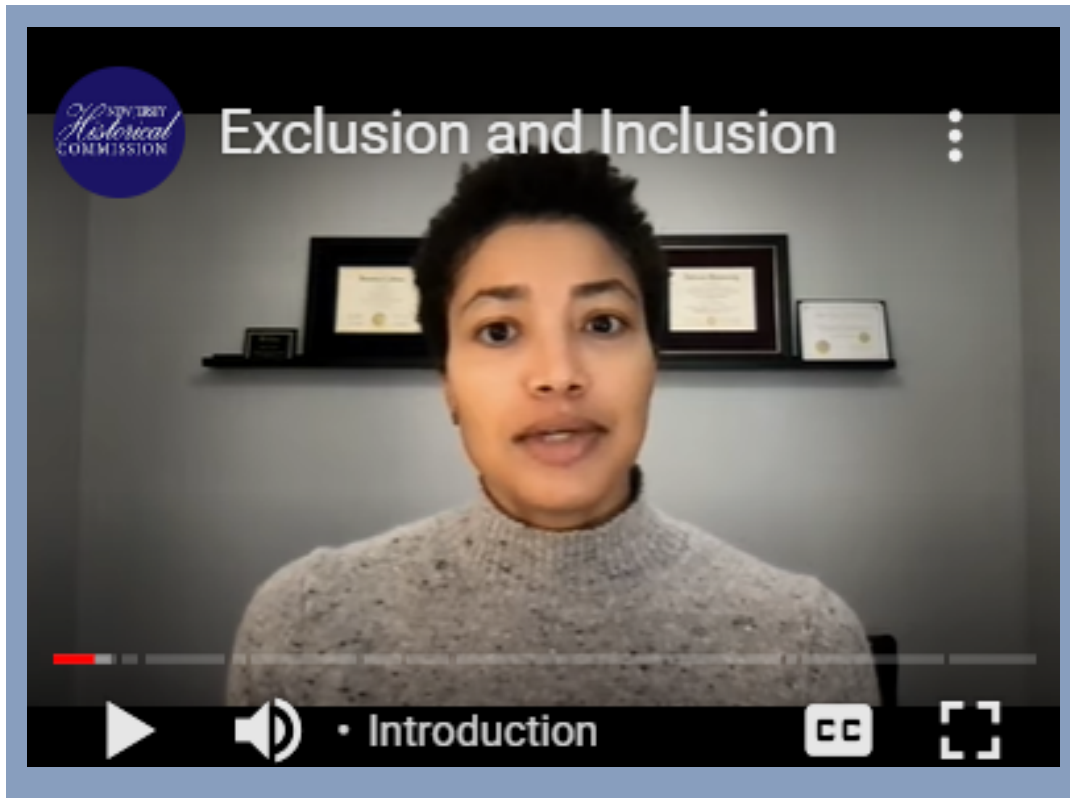
Do you remember the last time you heard a story that resonated with you? Perhaps it was a depiction that you could easily relate to or an experience that allowed you to draw a connection to your own life. It brought you in, stirred emotions, and in the moment you felt seen and heard, connected to the broader human story. This is the power of inclusion. People feel seen, heard, and included in the tapestry that is the story of the United States.

On the flip side, exclusion can have the very opposite effect. Stories can be limited in scope and perspective, creating a sense of comfort and familiarity for those represented in it at the cost of alienating the people and experiences left out. Exclusion captures only a part of the story, leaving out important details that portray a complex understanding of both the past and present.

With this key theme, we urge everyone to explore how a number of factors such as race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ableism, national origin, ethnicity, indigeneity, religion, politics, and culture have shaped the varied experiences of people throughout the past 250 years and beyond. Through a focus on inclusion and exclusion, we hope to create a more encompassing understanding of the past to help us navigate the present and guide our future.



# Exclusion/ Inclusion



Hear What Our Scholar Has To Say:  
<https://bit.ly/BundleExclusionInclusion>



## Brainstorming Ideas

- What current gaps exist in your programming when it comes to exploring the rich diversity of American history?
- By focusing on exclusion/ inclusion, what type of everyday stories can you explore that bring nuance and complexity to both the past and present?
- How can you reach out to the communities near your organization? What stories and programs would pull them in?

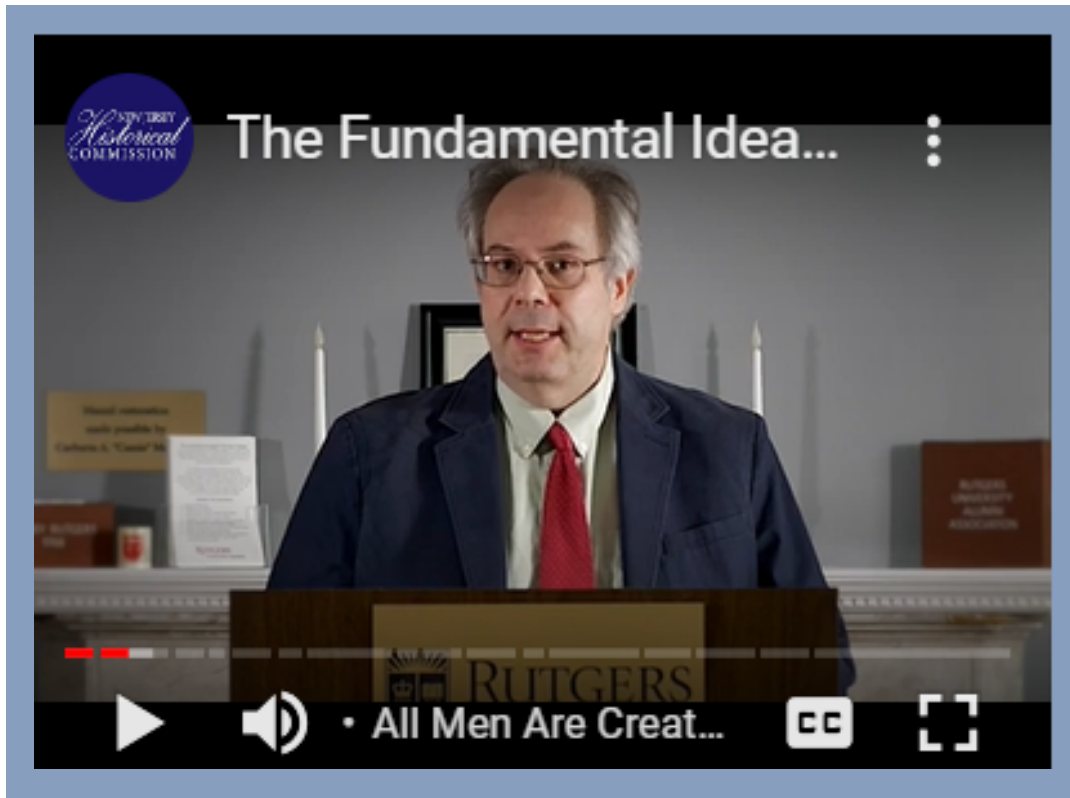
# Revolutionary Ideals

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are words that come to mind when we think about the American Revolution. Taken from the Declaration of Independence, these lofty ideas mean something different to everyone. Throughout our country's history we have witnessed a constant battle over defining what these terms mean, who they would apply to, and how they are experienced.

Revolutionary Ideals are part of New Jersey's fabric. Home to a diverse population, the struggle for life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness within a democracy continues to this day, often unequally. This interpretive theme asks us to grapple with the legacy of this struggle in the present, imagining ways in which we can foster public programs, events, and services that allow people of all walks of life to explore and experience these ideals.



# Revolutionary Ideals



Here What Our Scholar Has To Say:  
<https://bit.ly/BundleRevolutionaryIdeals>



## Brainstorming Ideas

- What services can you create in your community so that people can experience life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness?
- How can these ideals inspire public arts and projects?
- What ideals are revolutionary today? How do they connect to the past?

# Movement of People

We all know New Jersey is well known for its traffic, jug handles, and crafty speedsters. The movement of people throughout the state, whether by car, train, bus, or waterway, is a staple of what it means to be a New Jerseyan. Historically situated between New York and Philadelphia, the state's history of transience, a crossroads of people coming and going, has shaped the very fabric of its culture. First home to the Lenape, processes of colonization, displacement, slavery, immigration, and development have moved people in and out of the state, creating the diverse population we see today. These processes have shaped what it means to be an American as the influx of new migrants calls us to reflect on the idea of a "melting pot," reckoning with both the pathways and barriers people faced while settling into the place they now call home.



# Movement of People



Hear What Our Scholar Has To Say:  
<https://bit.ly/BundleMovement>



## Brainstorming Ideas

- How did the communities around you form? Where did the different cultures come from and why?
- How can you create programming that is welcoming to different groups? How do you bring them to the table and encourage movement into your place?
- What are some barriers to movement and how can you ensure that they are not preventing people from interacting?

# Political Participation

"No taxation without representation." A familiar slogan that begs the question, what does it mean for an individual and society to be represented by a government? How exactly will everyday people take part in civic society? Through what mechanisms? What limits will need to be put in place and why? Who will get the right to take part? Who is left out and why? These questions loom large throughout our state's history and are still grappled with today. The quintessential question of how can we create a society that is for the people and by the people is negotiated every day. Take a look around and see who is at the table making decisions or being asked for their input. Are they able to take part in a meaningful way? Does it reflect the broader society we see every day? The 250th is the perfect opportunity to explore these questions and encourage changes that bring people into the political process at various levels in their day-to-day lives.





# Political Participation



Hear What Our Scholar Has To Say:  
<https://bit.ly/BundlePoliticalParticipation>



## Brainstorming Ideas

- How can we ensure an educated populace who can carry out the expectations of partaking in a democracy?
- What road blocks towards political participation currently exist and how can we bring more people into the process?
- How can your organization bring more people to the decision making table?

# Property/ Sovereignty

Many of us were taught the song "This Land is Your Land" in grade school. It paints a pretty picture full of landscapes and opportunity. Originally written by Woody Guthrie, two verses are cutout of the school version. They go like this:

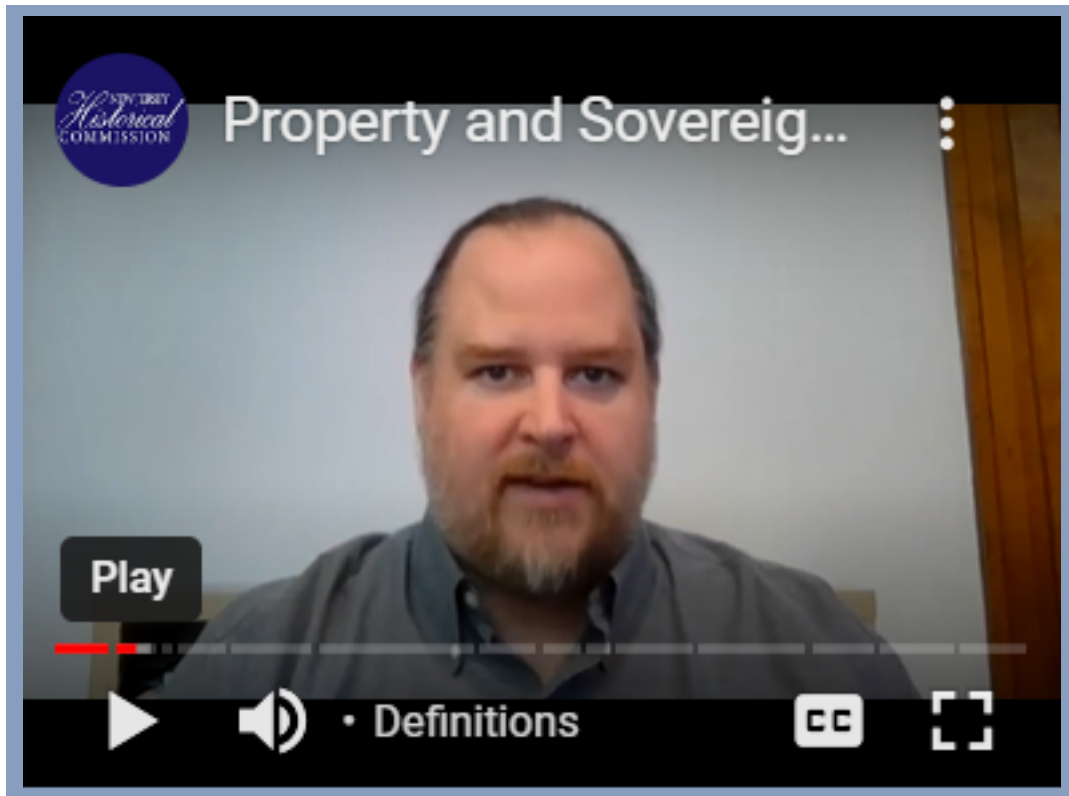
*"As I went walking I saw a sign there,  
And on the sign it said "No  
Trespassing."  
But on the other side it didn't say  
nothing. That side was made for you  
and me."*

*"In the squares of the city,  
In the shadow of a steeple;  
By the Relief Office, I'd seen my people.  
As they stood there hungry, I stood  
there asking,  
Is this land made for you and me?"*

Central to his critique of property and sovereignty, these lyrics call attention to how issues of property and sovereignty are deeply rooted in the act of exclusion and ownership. The story of the United States is shaped by the fundamental question of who gets to own something and by what right? From Indigenous displacement to eminent domain claims, the history of property and sovereignty is one based on various competing interests. Often decisions regarding property and sovereignty are based in self-interest, where justifications are not always noble. Protected by the legal system, property rights are often assumed. The 250th is a perfect opportunity to explore how this plays out on the ground and to what extent this can be changed for you and me.



# Property/ Sovereignty



Hear What Our Scholar Has To Say:  
<https://bit.ly/BundleProperty>



## Brainstorming Ideas

- How has our concept of property precluded people from taking part in the larger democratic project?
- How can the deep sense of time provided by history shape the direction of contemporary development plans?
- How can grassroots efforts such as mutual aid projects, worker owned cooperatives, and participatory governance democratize access to goods and standard of living?

# New Jersey as a "Battleground"

New Jersey is known as the Crossroads of the Revolution and for a good reason. More military conflicts occurred in New Jersey than any other colony during the American Revolution. And who can forget the Ten Crucial days, where arguably the fate of the rebellion was decided as Washington crossed the Delaware River into New Jersey? However within this backdrop, not everyone agreed on separating from Britain. We had Patriots, Loyalists, pacifists, in-betweeners, and switch-hitters. There was no one way of thinking about or experiencing the revolution.

Throughout New Jersey's history, these differences and divisions have played out in a number of ways, spanning from collaboration to hostility. This interpretive theme encourages you to explore these differences/ divisions from a place of understanding, to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange, but most importantly to learn how to live with difference and understand it. The irony is that by exploring and understanding our differences, we often foster a greater sense of commonality, complicating the stories we tell about each other both in the past and present.



# New Jersey as a "Battleground"



Hear What Our Scholar Has To Say:  
<https://bit.ly/BundleNJBattleground>



## Brainstorming Ideas

- How do you currently discuss differences and divisions in your programming? What do you place emphasis on and why?
- What points of commonality are emphasized? How does this complicate the story we tell?
- What spaces can you create to build bridges between different communities? What tools can you provide them to navigate differences?

# The Historical Process

How do we know what we know? What is the past? How much does the present shape the past? What role does evidence play and how do we account for its fragmentary nature? These are all big questions dealing with the process of history. Key to exploring and interpreting the past is reflecting on what does it mean to "do history". By framing history as an active process rather than a stagnant snapshot, we highlight how decisions in both the past and present shape the stories we tell. The 250th calls to attention this very process. By reflecting on the past 250 years, we have an opportunity to explore stories traditionally left out of the master narrative of history. It is our hope that every person in the state takes the opportunity to dive into their own family history and the stories of their communities.



# The Historical Process



Hear What Our Scholar Has To Say:  
<https://bit.ly/BundleHistoricalProcess>



## Brainstorming Ideas

- Record your own family history! Gather your family stories and preserve them for other generations via oral histories, scrapbooking, and social media.
- Have you ever been to an archive? What type of things do you think you will find? Start with the history of your own home or place of business. What was there before you?

# BRINGING REVOLUTION TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



*"Revolution is not a one-time event. It is becoming always vigilant for the smallest opportunity to make a genuine change in established, outgrown responses; for instance, it is learning to address each other's difference with respect."*

*-Audre Lorde*



# Engaging the Public



How do we connect with the public? Who are we reaching out to and including in our efforts? Who has been left out of decision making processes in the past? Whose story gets told and why? What can we do to facilitate deeper connections between people and places? These are some of the key questions we face when bringing the public into commemorative efforts. The 250th is the perfect opportunity to shift how we think of history, away from retaining dates and tidbits, towards embracing how it develops critical thinking, discovery, and a deeper sense of time and belonging in the present.

Imagine what history can look like with this shift! What if this deeper sense of time influenced the way we navigate the present and shape the future? What if we ran a health and wellness center in an old historic building, provided online classes that taught valuable skills, or hosted a crafts market to highlight local artisans. What if developmental projects, educational programs, and local services worked alongside, not opposed to this paradigm shift? What would this mean for residents on the ground? How can we creatively connect the past with the present, using the lessons of history to meet people where they are today and where they hope to go tomorrow?

The following section of the handbook explores ways in which organizations can approach communities in a dynamic and inclusive manner that brings them into the fold, creating a space at the table to further develop collaborative relationships.

# Community Initiative

**Your municipality can take part in the 250th right now!**



**Pass our Draft  
Resolution for  
Your  
Municipality**

**Support Local  
History  
Organizations  
and Public  
Libraries**



# Become A RevolutionNJ Community

## How Will Your Municipality Commemorate the 250th?

The 250th Anniversary of the United States is coming in 2026! This once-in-a-generation opportunity allows New Jerseyans across the state to create a lasting legacy. We are asking counties and municipalities to join us in commemorating the 250th by facilitating new partnerships, programs, and events that will engage local businesses, non-profits, artists, scholars, schools, universities, libraries, civic organizations, historic sites, community members, and visitors from all over.



## Become a RevolutionNJ Community in 4 easy steps:

- 1) Visit our website [www.revnj.org/communities](http://www.revnj.org/communities)
- 2) Download and fill out the draft resolution
- 3) Get your municipality to pass the resolution
- 4) Let us know <https://bit.ly/revnjcommunity>

# COLLABORATE

**Local  
Businesses,  
Artists, and  
Vendors**

**Municipal/  
County Officials  
and Institutions**

**Create Partnerships  
and Link Available  
Resources**

**Historic Sites,  
Public Spaces,  
and Landmarks**

**Non-Profits,  
Civic, and  
Religious  
Organizations**

# NETWORK



A key to developing relationships with other organizations is to think creatively about the available resources that already exist in a particular community. Each community is different and has their own history, demographics, and assets, all of which necessitates contextualization and flexibility when networking.

## Things to Consider:

- Embrace differences as opportunities
- Try new approaches that may be uncomfortable or outside of your typical wheelhouse
- Forge new partnerships with local businesses

## Are you a historic house museum?

Partner with local artisans to showcase some of their work.

## Are you a local restaurant?

Create a passport program between historic sites that sends business your way.

**Need more ideas? Check out our RevolutionNJ Placemaking Webinars.**

<https://bit.ly/revnjplacemaking>

# ENGAGE



## BECOME A PART OF YOUR COMMUNITY'S FABRIC

How and why do people come to a place? Understanding your community and what brings people to town is an excellent way to reimagine your public engagement strategy. Often times it is a mix of exciting events, restaurants to try, and leisure activities that bring people into your orbit. Inserting yourself into this agenda and making yourself relevant to their interests is key. This means moving away from a visitor-attraction dichotomy towards a service-engagement model that allows your organization/ site to be in the broader community. This requires flexibility and the willingness to adapt your programming to address shifting community demographics and needs. This can look like new exhibits that speak to migrant community histories, workshops that provide training and or tools needed by community members, or fun, interactive family events that bring people to your site on the weekend. Most of all, it means meeting people where they are. Think of creative ways in which members of the community can be a part of your organization's decision-making process, providing a space to shape the direction of your programs and efforts.

**For program ideas checkout our Placemaking for the 250th Resource list:**

<https://www.revnj.org/s/RevolutionNJ-Placemaking-Resource-List.pdf>

# PARTICIPATORY

## OUTREACH

Bring new faces  
to the table

## GATHER INPUT

What do people  
want done?

Make your  
programming  
impactful and  
meaningful to the  
public.

## ITERATE

Continually  
engage  
stakeholders

## BRAINSTORM

Design Projects  
with the people  
you want to  
reach

# CONNECT

## How does your site connect to the present?

Are you a historic site interpreting health practices? Think about how you can help facilitate medical services such as free health screenings for the public.



## FINDING YOUR CORE

*Engage the past,  
shape the future.*

Are you a site that focuses on domestic life? Think about ways in which you can offer childcare support for your community.

Do you interpret military history? Try partnering with local veteran associations to provide services and opportunities.



# PARTNER



## Steps to consider when creating a partnership

### **Define your community/ communities**

- Think geographic, descendant, cultural, affinity/ shared interests, and digital

### **Identify stakeholders**

- Who would be most affected by your program?
  - Are the most vulnerable people at the table?
- Who has a mission/ goals that complements yours?

### **Knock down barriers to inclusion**

- Think "nothing about us, without us"
- Are you involving stakeholders in conceptualizing and planning projects or are they an afterthought?

### **Create communication and organizational guidelines**

- How will partnerships function?
- What will the organization look like?
- What mechanisms for disagreement, feedback, and change are in place?

### **Practice sustainability**

- How can you ensure that the partnership grows and is able to be sustained through good and bad times?

# BECOME A PROUD PARTNER TODAY



As New Jersey plans to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America, we aim to create a statewide experience that invites participation from everyone. We invite all organizations to join us in this endeavor by submitting an application to become a RevolutionNJ Partner.

Please reference our [Partner Brand Guidelines](#) for more details and visit our website for more information:

<https://www.revny.org/revnypartners>



## RevolutionNJ

ENGAGE THE PAST. SHAPE THE FUTURE.

**PROUD PARTNER**

# PROGRAM IDEAS



*"Things which do not grow and change are dead things."*

*– Louise Erdrich*

# Concert Series



## *At a glance:*

*An arts-based organization sees RevolutionNJ as an opportunity to tie together arts, culture, and history. Using both the strategic and interpretive frameworks to guide the development of the series, they achieve their goal of creating an inclusive program that celebrates the diverse musical traditions found in New Jersey.*

## Goal:

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An arts-based organization wants to create a concert series for RevolutionNJ exploring the theme of Exclusion/Inclusion outlined in the interpretive framework. They want to ensure that they celebrate the diverse musical traditions of New Jersey's residents over the past 250 years.

## Plan of Action:

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The organization creates a public concert series that brings in diverse musicians that represents the various cultures of New Jersey's residents. In addition to creating a number of free public concerts, they partner with local organizations (historic sites and civic groups) and vendors (food, crafts, etc.) to create an environment that commemorates local communities and their histories. Recording these events, they create a repository of NJ's musical heritage for future generations.

## Themes Incorporated:

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Inclusion/  
Exclusion

Political  
Participation

The Historical  
Process

## Strategic Goals Met:

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- 1 Integration of arts, history organizations, and local businesses (restaurants, food trucks, etc.) via a series of free public events.
- 2 Free public access and exposure to diverse musical traditions.
- 3 Incorporation of recorded music into K-12 classrooms.

# Museum Redesign



*At a glance:*

*A historic museum wants to update an exhibit that no longer reflects an accurate picture of the past. They want to make sure that they are engaging with the interpretive framework in a manner that is both respectful and engaging with the subject matter.*

## Goal:

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A history museum wants to expand their current exhibit on Indigenous history in the state. They have a large collection that was put together over the years and do not know how to move forward with creating an updated interpretation. They want to approach this effort in collaboration with one of the state tribes so that the exhibit is reflective of contemporary concerns and knowledge.

## Plan of Action:

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The history museum first did an audit of their current collections and exhibits. After creating a list, they got in touch with leaders from the state's Native American tribes to open a door for collaboration. After numerous meetings, both groups decided on a plan of action towards returning family heirlooms and borrowing others to create a new exhibit. Using the words and interpretations of their collaborators, the museum created an exhibit that accurately reflects the cultural history of the state's Native American tribes.

## Themes Incorporated:

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Inclusion/  
Exclusion

Movement of  
People

Property/  
Sovereignty

## Strategic Goals Met:

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- 1** The museum created a new exhibit in collaboration with state tribes.
- 2** Indigenous artifacts in the museum's collection were repatriated (returned) to the appropriate state tribes.
- 3** A new collaborative partnership was established moving forward.

# Municipal Program



*At a glance:  
A municipality wants to commemorate the 250th through the unveiling of a public arts installation. This installation was decided on by members of the community through an open contest.*

## Goal:

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In order to create grassroots fervor and public engagement, a town creates a public program asking for members of the community to submit ideas for an arts installation. Members of the community are asked to explore the history of their town and to create an installation that reflects their research. The town will fund this project and an artist/ organization to create a piece that commemorates the 250th.

## Plan of Action:

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The town announces the competition for a new public arts installation. As part of their larger development goals, the town wants to ensure that there is a public space that serves the diverse needs of the community. After gathering submissions for projects, the town asks members of the community to vote on their favorite. The winner of the competition is then commissioned to create the piece. After a dedication ceremony, the new installation becomes a hot spot for community events and gatherings.

## Themes Incorporated:

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Political Participation

Revolutionary Ideals

The Historical Process

## Strategic Goals Met:

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- 1 The town created a new place for the community to come together and host future events.
- 2 The art installation competition led to a number of submissions that the planning committee wants to pursue in addition to the winner.
- 3 Community engagement created a fervor at the grassroots level for further meaningful political participation.

# Public Library



## *At a glance:*

*A public library wants to use the 250th as an opportunity to engage K-12 audiences in civic engagement. They create a series of programs that introduce residents to the ins and outs of local governance and public services, using the library as a focal point for community engagement.*

## Goal:

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In order to increase awareness of available public services, a public library is creating a series of programs centered on furthering civic engagement. Using these programs, the library hopes to raise resident's engagement with local politics and use of public services.

## Plan of Action:

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In order to increase public engagement and awareness of civic duties, the public library creates a number of programs to bring people into the civic process. They specifically engage a participatory budget model, exploring how members of the community can utilize tax dollars to fund public programs of interest. Through this process they learn about local governance structures and the political process as a whole.

## Themes Incorporated:

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Inclusion/  
Exclusion

Political  
Participation

Property/  
Sovereignty

## Strategic Goals Met:

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- 1 The formation of a participatory budget workshop increased patronage to both the public library and town hall meetings.
- 2 By hosting workshops about civics, residents learned how local politics work, leading to more engagement with future public meetings.
- 3 As a result of running these workshops, material for K-12 civic engagement was created and disseminated to local schools.

# Youth Organization



*At a glance:*

*The Girl Scouts of America are partnering with non-profit organizations and historic sites to create programs related to their Environmental Stewardship Badges.*

## Goal:

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Girl Scouts throughout the state want to leave a lasting legacy reminiscent of the Liberty Tree program of the bicentennial. Together with organizations around the state, they are planning a number of initiatives that will engage with environmental concerns. Their hope is to combat climate change in various avenues.

## Plan of Action:

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The Girl Scouts will create a green 250th badge for eco-related projects that contribute to the strategic goals and interpretive themes outlined in RevolutionNJ. Working closely with historic sites, nature preserves, and other organizations across the state, they will explore environmental challenges, create solutions, and advocate for causes. They will create a number of programs to meet community needs including nature walks, community gardens, and solar energy projects.

## Themes Incorporated:

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Political  
Participation

Property/  
Sovereignty

Revolutionary  
Ideals

## Strategic Goals Met:

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- 1 By tackling environmental issues, the Girl Scouts of American demonstrate how Revolutionary Ideals can be put into practice.
- 2 By partnering with organizations throughout the state, they help them achieve their environmental goals.
- 3 Their advocacy for clean energy projects leads to an increase in quality of life for neighborhoods looking to decrease their carbon footprint.



# Businesses



*At a glance:*

*Capitalizing on the growing craft brew industry, a former mill site wants to host a yearly craft brew festival. The first one occurring in 2026 has led to a competition amongst breweries to create the state's 250th beer.*

## Goal:

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New Jersey's craft brewery industry wants to commemorate the 250th. Creating a special task force, made up of representatives from the state's breweries, they develop a 250th commission in charge of creating programming and events centered around the commemoration. Their goal is to reimagine the relationship between breweries, taverns, and the public.

## Plan of Action:

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New Jersey's burgeoning craft brewery industry is seeking to celebrate the 250th in the most memorable way they can. Developing a statewide competition, each brewery creates a 250th special brew inspired by the past 250 years of history in the state. Hosting not only the competition, they also sponsor tavern talks across the state, using the pub space to build community and bring scholars, artists, and community organizations around the state together.

## Themes Incorporated:

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**Inclusion/  
Exclusion**

**Movement of  
People**

**Revolutionary  
Ideals**

## Strategic Goals Met:

---

- 1** By creating a competition, breweries begin exploring the history of their industry in the state and bring this knowledge to the public.
- 2** Tavern talks create a sense of community and place that connect people to their local histories, inspiring new programs to develop.
- 3** The craft beer industry helps promote heritage tourism around the state, increasing both historic site and brewery visitation.

# RESOURCES



*"Perhaps the sentiments contained in the following pages, are not YET sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favour; a long habit of not thinking a thing WRONG, gives it a superficial appearance of being RIGHT, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom. But the tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason"*

*-Thomas Paine*

# Public History Resources



NATIONAL COUNCIL  
ON PUBLIC HISTORY

[www.ncph.org](http://www.ncph.org)



[www.aaslh.org/programs/250th/](http://www.aaslh.org/programs/250th/)

# MADE BY US

POWERING OUR FUTURE WITH HISTORY

[www.historymadebyus.com](http://www.historymadebyus.com)



THE INCLUSIVE  
HISTORIAN'S  
HANDBOOK

[www.inclusivehistorian.com](http://www.inclusivehistorian.com)



[www.amrevmuseum.org](http://www.amrevmuseum.org)

EDUCATING FOR  
**AMERICAN**  
 **DEMOCRACY**

[www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org](http://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org)

# Inclusive History Resources

## [African American History Program at the New Jersey Historical Commission](https://nj.gov/state/historical/his-african-american-history.shtml)

<https://nj.gov/state/historical/his-african-american-history.shtml>

## [New Jersey's Indigenous Voices](https://nj.gov/state/historical/assets/pdf/sharing-the-continuing-story-resources.pdf)

<https://nj.gov/state/historical/assets/pdf/sharing-the-continuing-story-resources.pdf>

## [Covid-19 Digital Resources](https://nj.gov/state/historical/assets/pdf/njhc-covid-19-resources.pdf)

<https://nj.gov/state/historical/assets/pdf/njhc-covid-19-resources.pdf>

## [Hidden Tribes Report](https://hiddentribes.us/media/qfpekz4g/hidden_tribes_report.pdf)

[https://hiddentribes.us/media/qfpekz4g/hidden\\_tribes\\_report.pdf](https://hiddentribes.us/media/qfpekz4g/hidden_tribes_report.pdf)

## [Defusing the History Wars Report](https://www.moreincommon.com/media/y4rpsigy/defusing-the-history-wars_more-in-common-1.pdf)

[https://www.moreincommon.com/media/y4rpsigy/defusing-the-history-wars\\_more-in-common-1.pdf](https://www.moreincommon.com/media/y4rpsigy/defusing-the-history-wars_more-in-common-1.pdf)

## [Co-Designing Black Neighborhood Heritage Conservation](https://blackspace.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Brownsville-Heritage-Conservation-Playbook-BlackSpace-Org.pdf)

<https://blackspace.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Brownsville-Heritage-Conservation-Playbook-BlackSpace-Org.pdf>

*"How do you get people to want to live in time, to have a sense of the importance of time for growth, development, of the need for ups-and-downs, of non-homogenized development? [...] A revolution in the U.S. is only going to be led and made by people with some sense of the thickness of time, of time as duration, of time as heterogeneous, of development through contradiction, not in a straight line."*

— James Boggs, *Conversations in Maine: Exploring Our Nation's Future*

# People First Approaches



More in  
Common

[www.moreincommon.com](http://www.moreincommon.com)

Rural America Placemaking Toolkit

[www.ruralplacemaking.com](http://www.ruralplacemaking.com)



COMMUNITY COMMONS

[www.communitycommons.org](http://www.communitycommons.org)



PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROJECT

[www.participatorybudgeting.org](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org)

BLACKSPACE

[www.blackspace.org](http://www.blackspace.org)



CEDAR—Communities Engaging with Difference and Religion

[www.cedarnetwork.org](http://www.cedarnetwork.org)



[www.communityeconomies.org](http://www.communityeconomies.org)

Project  
for Public  
Spaces

[www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)

*"Knowledge must be understood as knowledge for (action), rather than knowledge of (content)."*

*(From "Living with Difference", by Seligman et al 2015, p.11)*

# Grants



<https://nj.gov/state/historical/his-grants.shtml>



<https://www.nj.gov/dca/njht/programs/overview/>



[https://nj.gov/state/njsca/dos\\_njsca\\_grants.html](https://nj.gov/state/njsca/dos_njsca_grants.html)



<https://njhumanities.org/grants/grants-overview/>

*"Any historical narrative is a bundle of silences."  
Michel-Rolph Trouillot*

# FAQ

## **Can I get my program branded as a RevolutionNJ program?**

Yes! Become a partner today: <https://www.revnj.org/revnjpartners>

## **Do I have to engage with all the themes in order to take part in the initiative?**

No, the themes are meant to guide you towards different questions and approaches.

## **I am not a Revolutionary War site, can I still be part of RevolutionNJ?**

Absolutely! RevolutionNJ explores the whole 250 years and beyond of history in the state. We hope that various organizations including historic sites, civic groups, businesses, and the arts, take part by drawing inspiration from these themes and structuring events and programs around them.

## **Isn't history just about the facts? Why is there an interpretive framework?**

[Reframing History](#) is a good primer on how to approach historical thinking as a process.

Also check out the video entitled [Teaching with Integrity: Historians Speak](#)

## **Are there any materials to help me take part in RevolutionNJ?**

Yes! We have a number of resources listed on our website for historic sites, educators, communities, and anyone else who would like to take part in commemorating the 250th!

<https://www.revnj.org/resources>

<https://www.revnj.org/communities>

<https://www.revnj.org/educators>

<https://www.revnj.org/revnjpartners>

## **I have an idea for a program that RevolutionNJ should consider. How do I suggest it?**

Revolution has a [Digital Suggestion Box](#). We would love to hear your ideas!

## **Where can I go to find more information about the historic sites in the state?**

<https://www.journeythroughjersey.com/sites/>

<https://visitnj.org/nj/amusements-activities/historic-sites-memorials>

## **What can I do to bridge the gap in our polarized world?**

Check out our community resources linked in this document and read the following reports:

[Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape](#)

[Defusing the History Wars: Finding Common Ground in Teaching America's National Story](#)



# RevolutionNJ

ENGAGE THE PAST. SHAPE THE FUTURE.

For more information about RevolutionNJ and how you can take part in commemorative efforts, visit

our website:

[www.revnj.org](http://www.revnj.org)

Contact us at:

[info@revnj.org](mailto:info@revnj.org)



Governor Philip D. Murphy  
Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, Esq.



RevolutionNJ is a partnership between the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the New Jersey Department of State, and the nonprofit organization, Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, to plan the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States in New Jersey.