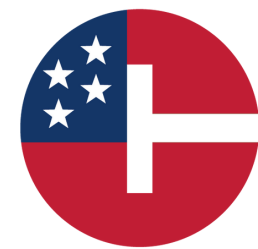


Welcome!



In the chat: Please share
your name, organization,
and why you chose to
participate in this
workshop today.

Putting It All Together: Preparing for 2026

Developed by:



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION *for* STATE *and* LOCAL HISTORY



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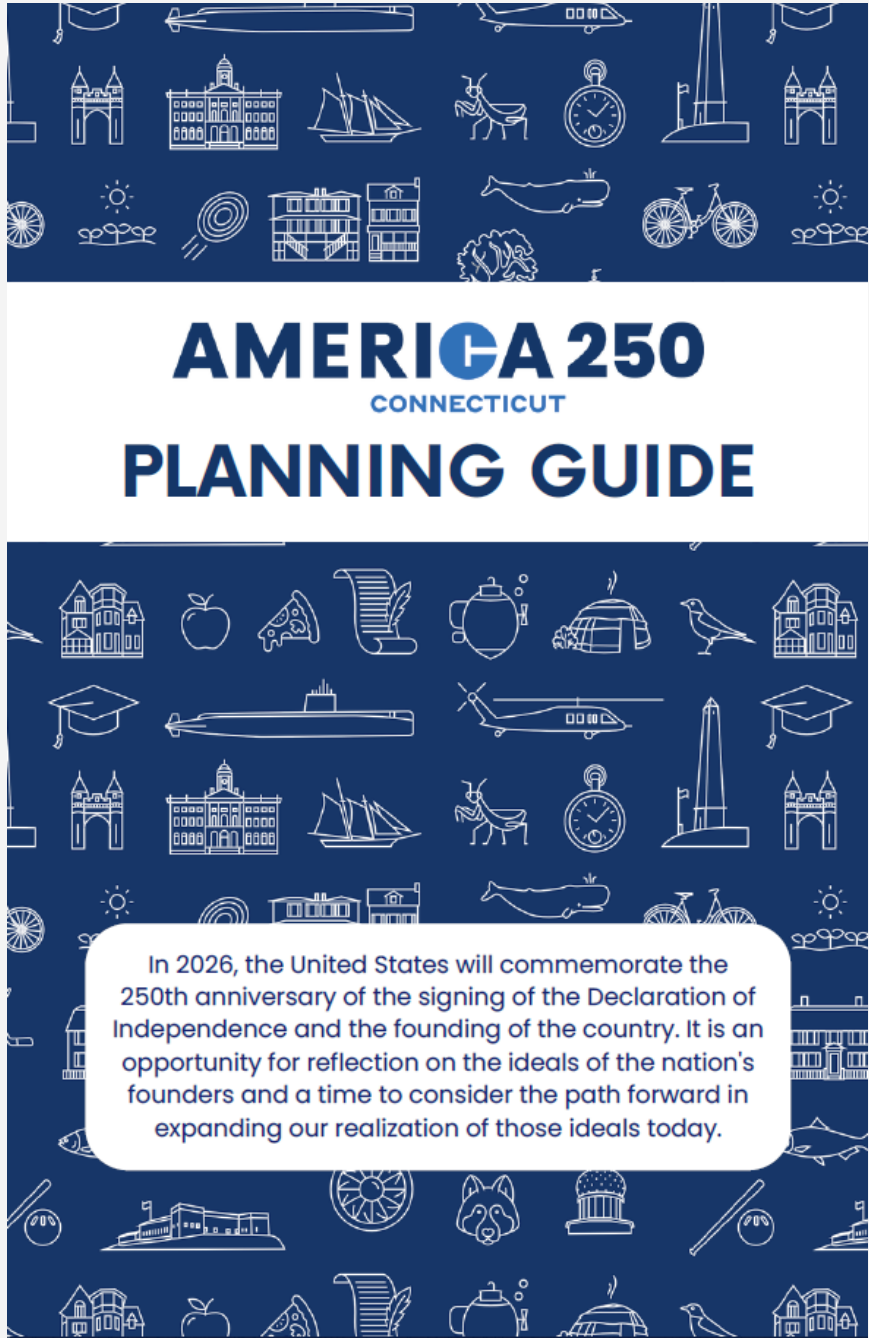
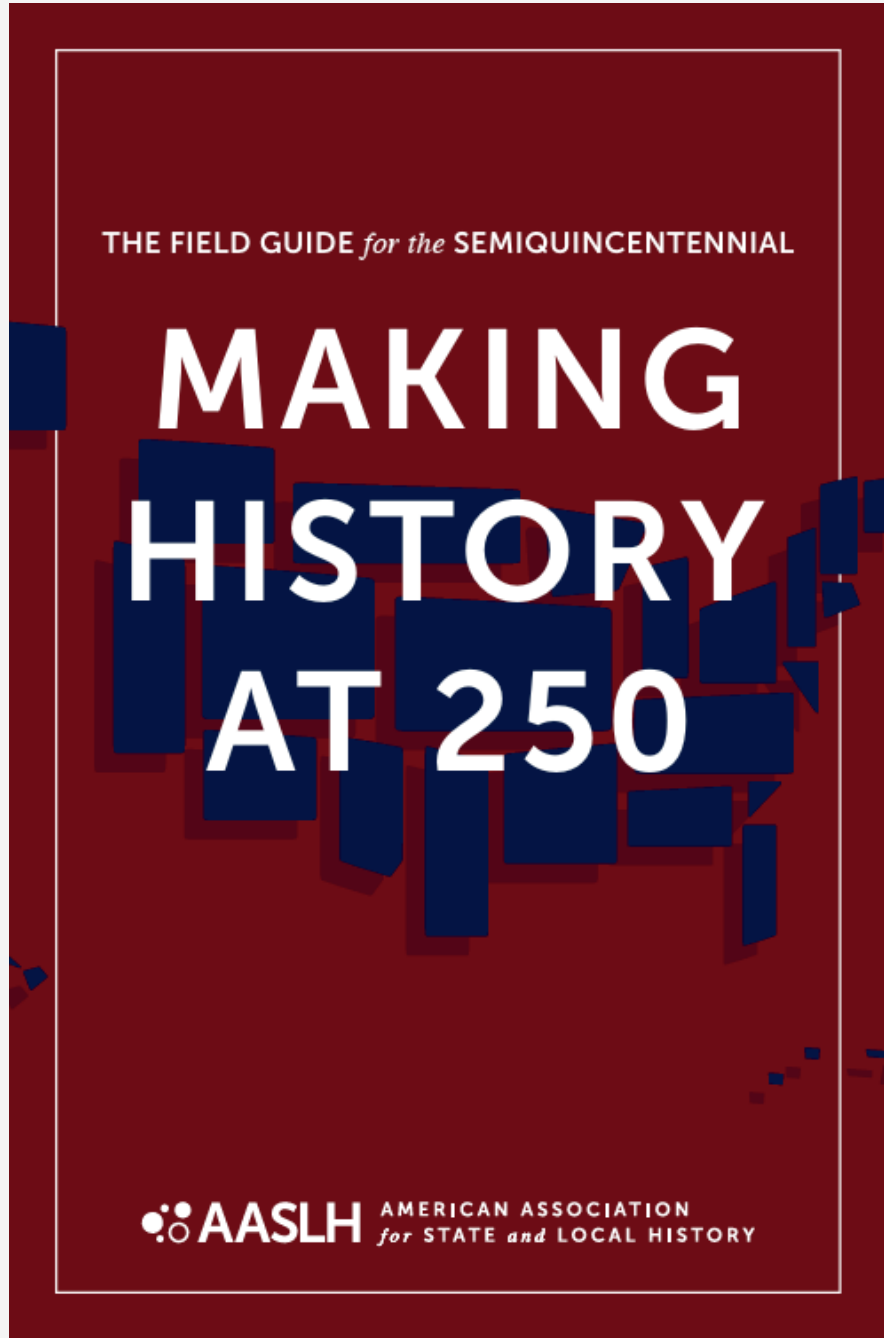


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CThumanities

AASLH Field Guide and America 250 | CT Planning Guide





Vision

A successful 250th in Connecticut will be defined by its reach and impact; specifically, the number of opportunities created for civic engagement, and the degree to which those opportunities make all residents of Connecticut feel represented and included. Connecticut will serve as a model for revolutionary civic participation that inspires others with our people's passions, histories, and capacity to create positive and sustainable change—together. The legacy of the 250th will be greater access to sites across the state and a deeper sense of belonging.

Guiding Values

Events surrounding the commemoration of the 250th will take a variety of forms, from celebratory to analytical to commemorative, and will involve people with a variety of backgrounds and beliefs. Regardless of what form their participation takes, we ask that organizations align their initiatives with inclusive themes and values, provide access to all, and consider the reverberations of our words and actions.



Themes: Tell Inclusive Stories

This commemoration is an opportunity to continue the nation's reckoning with the totality of its past. By **telling previously untold stories** we will enable everyone to find a place in our nation's narrative.

Nero Hawley in the Revolutionary War

Nero Hawley was an enslaved person who enlisted in the Continental Army and served under George Washington.

[A Connecticut Slave in George Washington's Army](#)

Hartford's Black Labor Proponents

Early 20th century labor unions in Hartford, like the Colored Waiters and Cooks Local 359, advocated for "living wages, justice, protection and equal rights" for Black workers – who often earned substantially less than their white counterparts.

[Serving Up Justice: Hartford's Black Workers Organize](#)

Themes: For the Common Good

As we reckon with what the nation's 250th means in Connecticut, we will **encourage civic engagement** to continue to build our communities, state, and nation using the democratic ideals outlined in our founding documents.

Roger Sherman: Public Servant

Roger Sherman was the only person to sign all four of the most significant documents in our nation's early history. He spent the last 30 years of his life as a dedicated public servant, including serving as mayor of New Haven, a superior court judge, and in the U.S. Congress.

Roger Sherman, Revolutionary and Dedicated Public Servant

The Smith Sisters & Women's Rights

Abolitionists & suffragists Abigail & Julia Smith of Glastonbury came to national attention when they refused to pay what they regarded as an unfair land assessment. As a result of their refusal, the tax collector seized 7 of their cows. The Smiths argued that they were being unfairly taxed without representation and eventually won a lawsuit.

The Smith Sisters, Their Cows, and Women's Rights in Glastonbury

Themes: Power of Place

Connecticut is comprised of 169 towns and cities, five recognized tribes, and countless communities with **unique identities and contributions**. A community-based structure will allow each of Connecticut's towns and cities to define their own programs and ideas about how they can engage their residents.

The Redding Encampment

Continental troops spent the winter of 1778–79 in Redding, encountering difficult conditions that caused it to become known as “Connecticut’s Valley Forge.”

Connecticut's Valley Forge: The Redding Encampment &
Putnam Memorial State Park

Andover to Woodstock: 169 Towns

After 375+ years, Connecticut is made up of 169 incorporated towns. The newest, West Haven, celebrated its centennial in 2021. Over time, a number of factors shaped the state – including religion, difficulties with travel, and industrialization.

Andover to Woodstock: How Connecticut Ended up with 169
Towns

Themes: Doing History

The commission's work will focus on **Connecticut's role in the Revolution**—its people, sites, and historic context. The state can boost tourism by amplifying stories at historic sites, trails, and buildings, and by constructing programs around notable events.

Abigail Hinman: Heroine or Legend?

Abigail Hinman, wife of a U.S. Navy Captain living in New London, was rumored to have pointed a musket at Benedict Arnold during the burning of New London.

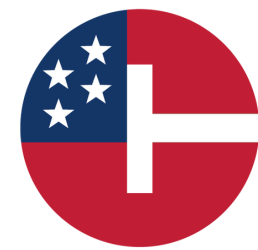
Abigail Hinman: Heroine of the American Revolution or Legend?

The Story Trail of Voices

Mohegan History and religion have been preserved by many different voices in many different families through Mohegan Oral Tradition. Mohegans enjoy an unbroken connection to their ancient lifeways, passing from Martha Uncas to Emma Baker and Fidelia Fielding to Gladys Tantaquidgeon, continuing to the present day.

The Story Trail of Voices

Themes:



In the chat: Do any of these themes resonate in particular for you or your organization? How might they apply to work you are already planning?

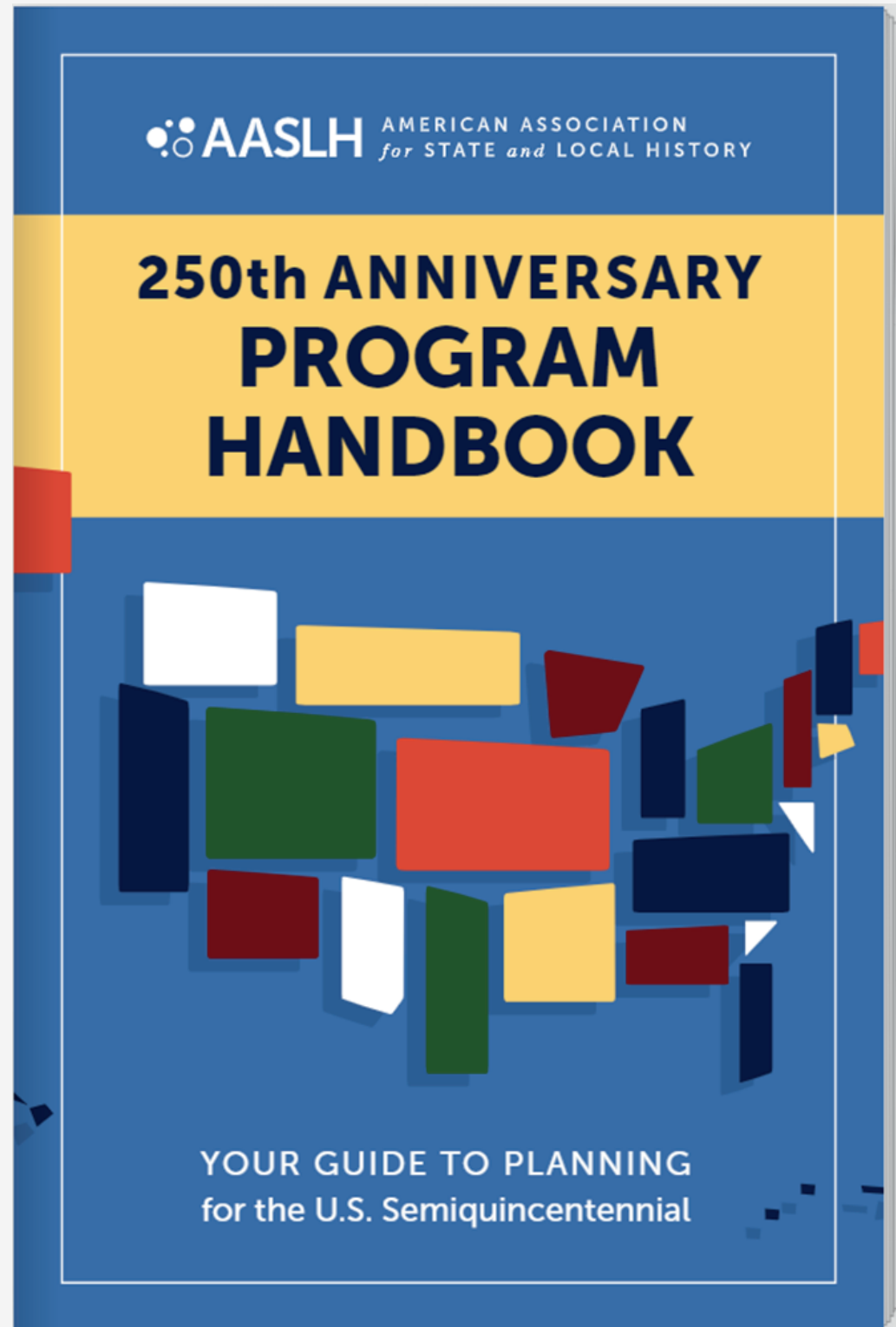


**How can we connect the themes
to things we already do?**



Program Worksheet (for Programs, Events, Exhibits)

Ongoing Programs	Tell Inclusive Stories	For the Common Good	Power of Place	Doing History



Using the Themes

AMERICA 250
CONNECTICUT

LET'S BEGIN! A Pre-Program Checklist

The following checklist outlines basic steps for designing audience-centered programs that align with your mission. The complexity of program development can vary widely depending on your resources, timeline, and other factors. Doing the work in phases can make the process more effective no matter how big (or small) your program idea is.

Lay the foundation and set parameters

- ☐ Articulate the goals of the program or service.
- ☐ Identify the audience(s) you want to reach and their needs.
- ☐ Define what success looks like and how you will measure it.
- ☐ Identify the constraints that will shape the work (e.g., budget, time, staff, etc.).
- ☐ Identify potential partners and other stakeholders.

Brainstorm and plan

- ☐ Brainstorm ideas that build on your foundation and fall within the parameters you set. This is a great place to use the program ideas featured in this handbook!
- ☐ Evaluate ideas and share them with staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders to determine which are the best options.
- ☐ Choose the program or service idea that best fits your mission, parameters, and interests.
- ☐ Write a project plan that defines and assigns the necessary roles, responsibilities, and timelines. Who is doing what? When will they do it?

Implement

- ☐ Carry out your plan, ensuring that you are staying on schedule and on budget, as well as aligned with your goals.
- ☐ Use your and your partners' networks—social media, print, TV/radio, email, etc.—to market the program/service.

Follow-up

- ☐ Identify lessons learned from this program to inform future program development. For example:
 - ☐ Hold a meeting to talk about what went well and how you might improve the program in the future, including how you may apply lessons learned to other programs or collaborations.
 - ☐ Write up the lessons in a short report. Don't forget to include numbers about attendance and budgets.

Programming Ideas

Use the following ideas as inspiration for your Semiquincentennial plans. Feel free to adapt the programs and services to fit your organization's needs and parameters.

Look for these icons throughout this handbook:

- Learn more about this type of program through the accompanying "Program Spotlight."

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT ●

- ⚠ This project may require extra time, expertise, or technical assistance; plan accordingly.

K-12 AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

Introduce younger generations to the idea that history is more than dates and facts—it's about people's lives and why what happened yesterday matters today. Studying history helps younger learners build knowledge and critical thinking skills, enhances civic engagement, establishes stronger links between their curriculum standards and their local history, connects them to their communities, and yields future audiences and donors for your organization.

Girl Scout Programs and Workshops at the Elk Grove Historical Museum & Society

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT ●

The Elk Grove Historical Museum & Society (IL) offers various programs and workshops throughout the year to help local Girl Scouts earn history-related badges. By connecting the museum's collection, grounds, and other natural and historic resources with the badge programs already provided by the Girl Scouts, the Elk Grove Historical Museum offers a way to help young, local residents become more familiar with the museum and its history while they work toward their own scouting goals. For example, the museum helps scouts use GPS to search for items on the museum campus, learn about Indigenous storytelling, and practice early twentieth-century crafts—all of which count toward existing Girl Scouts badges. This program is a great example of connecting a museum or historical society's expertise and assets with an outside partner organization to create a valuable experience for everyone involved.

SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Sharing your community's stories and collections through social and other digital media outlets helps you get your stories out to the world by reaching a wider audience. Photographs and pithy, engaging pieces of text are essential for attracting engagement.

"Museum Moments" with the Elgin History Museum

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT ●

In 2022, the Elgin History Museum (IL) won an Award of Excellence from AASLH for their "Museum Moments" video project. Through this initiative, the museum produced twenty short-form videos that shared seldom-seen objects, documents, and photographs from their collection, using them to share unique insights in local historical moments. The videos were then shared on YouTube, social media, and local television, as well as inside the museum. Through creative outreach, the project not only allowed the museum to share lesser-known artifacts from their collection, it helped them reach new audiences, forge partnerships, and instill a sense of community pride.

◆ Social media posts

Display objects from your collection or stories about your community that fit with the AASLH **Making History at 250** themes (or other themes you find meaningful) in social media posts. Keep posts brief and engaging—40 words or less. Layer in additional information with links to pages on your website or other documents. You might try hosting a live Instagram or Facebook event with a partner organization or asking students to film short, casual videos. Certain brands of collection software, like PastPerfect, have add-ons that make it easy to share your collections via your website.

◆ Today in history

Take your visitors on a journey through their community's history at different points of the Revolutionary era—or other eras that connect thematically—with a daily "Today in History" post. You might even consider partnering with a local high school history class and having them write a series of posts based on local history topics. This type of project gives students real-world writing experience and the joy of seeing their work published.

◆ Podcasts and videos ● ⚠

Produce a podcast or video series based on local history stories. You could explore a single theme across many eras, deeply investigate a single time period or person, or other thematic approaches to organizing episodes. Work with a local student or youth groups to research, write, and record episodes.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Encourage your community to explore how learning about our history, government, and democratic institutions can inspire greater participation in the community's civic life. History organizations are uniquely poised to help their communities see how civic engagement has affected the course of history—starting before the founding of the United States and continuing to the present day.

"Germans in West Chicago" at the West Chicago City Museum

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT ●

In conjunction with the city's 175th anniversary, the West Chicago City Museum held both in-person and virtual programs exploring the history of nineteenth-century German immigrants to the city. Not only did this program help members of the West Chicago community to learn more about the history of immigration to the city they call home, but it provided engaging opportunities to discuss how the immigrant experience in the city today has changed, and how it has stayed the same. This program offered an excellent way of leveraging a major anniversary to serve community needs and explore the important connections between the past and the present.

◆ Voter registration and polling

Conduct voter registration drives or serve as a polling location. This brings people into your building and can help them make a connection between civics and history. Reach out to your local elections commission and ask about the requirements.

◆ Citizenship ceremonies ⚠

Host citizenship ceremonies to help create a bond between new citizens and your community. Provide each new citizen with a family membership to your site or organization as a congratulatory gift. Contact your local Federal Courthouse for details on how to serve as a host site.

◆ Community town hall ●

Hold a gathering to talk about issues or concerns that have affected your community in the past and present. For example, explore and compare experiences of historical and current immigrant groups, or the history of voting rights in your community, or many other subjects. Team up with local cultural groups or civic organizations for on-the-ground insights. Connect with national civics celebrations and host your events during Civic Learning Week or Made By Us's Civic Season. Be sure to sharpen your facilitation skills or bring in a professional facilitator to moderate the event.

America 250 Cookbook

Theme: Tell Inclusive Stories

Audience: All ages

Materials Needed:

- Submission form (digital and/or hard copy)
 - Flyers
 - Software for production (Microsoft Word, Publisher, Canva, or InDesign, depending on skill level)
1. Establish criteria for recipe (ingredients, cooking directions, photos, narrative, etc.) & method of submission
 2. Publicize request for recipes (social media, local newspaper, flyers at library and community spaces)
 3. Volunteer(s) compile recipes and edit as needed
 4. Publish a digital copy and/or print version
 5. Host a “launch party” to celebrate with your community



**How can we evaluate what we
spend time and energy on for the
Semiquincentennial?**



Strategy Screen

A set of criteria that your organization uses to choose whether a particular idea is consistent with your identity

Strategy Screen - Where to Begin

Identify your organizational strengths and goals:

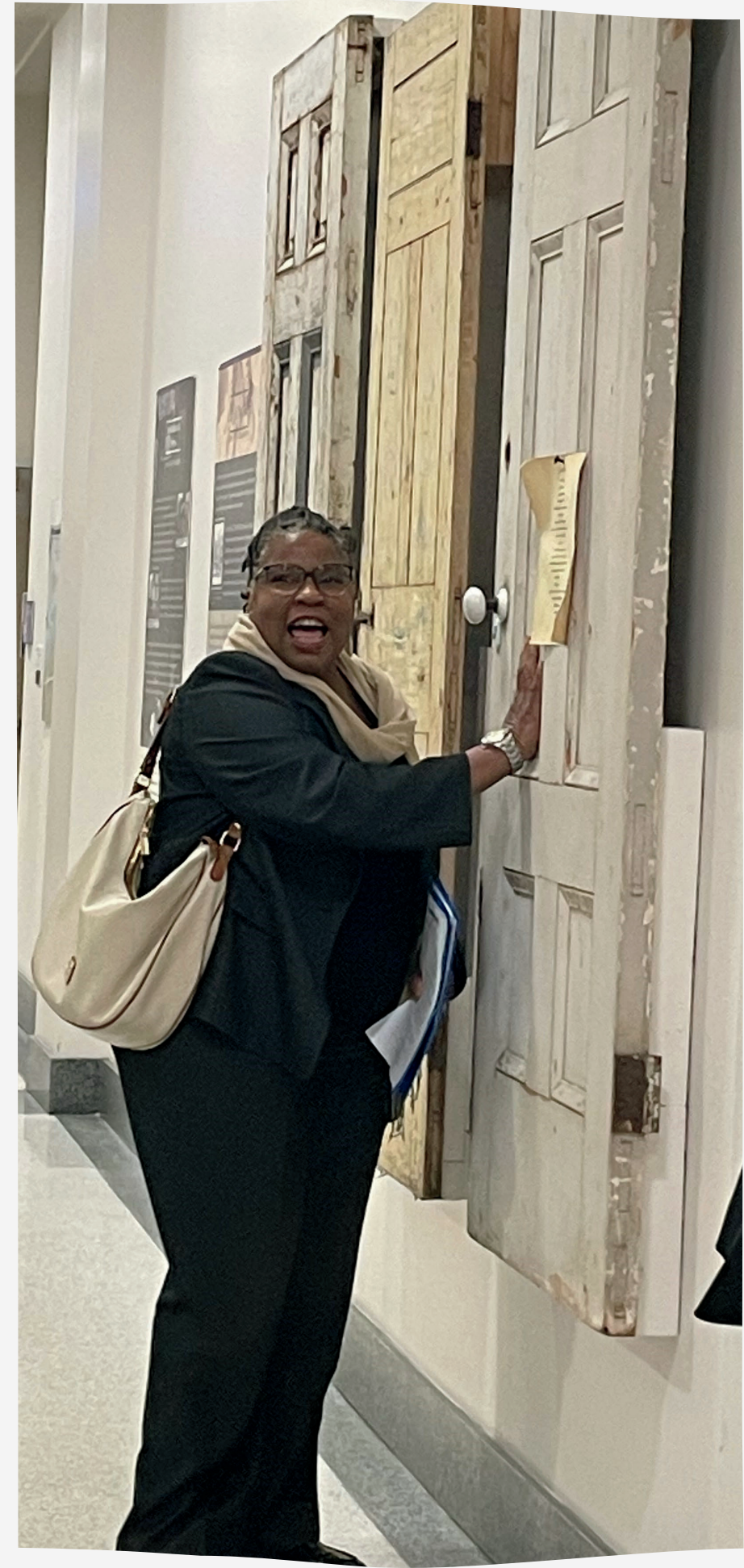
- Mission and Vision
- 3 strengths
- 3 goals



Strategy Screen - Layering on the 250th

As a breakout group:

- Pick a 250th theme.
- Brainstorm program ideas.
- Write on half sheets of paper.

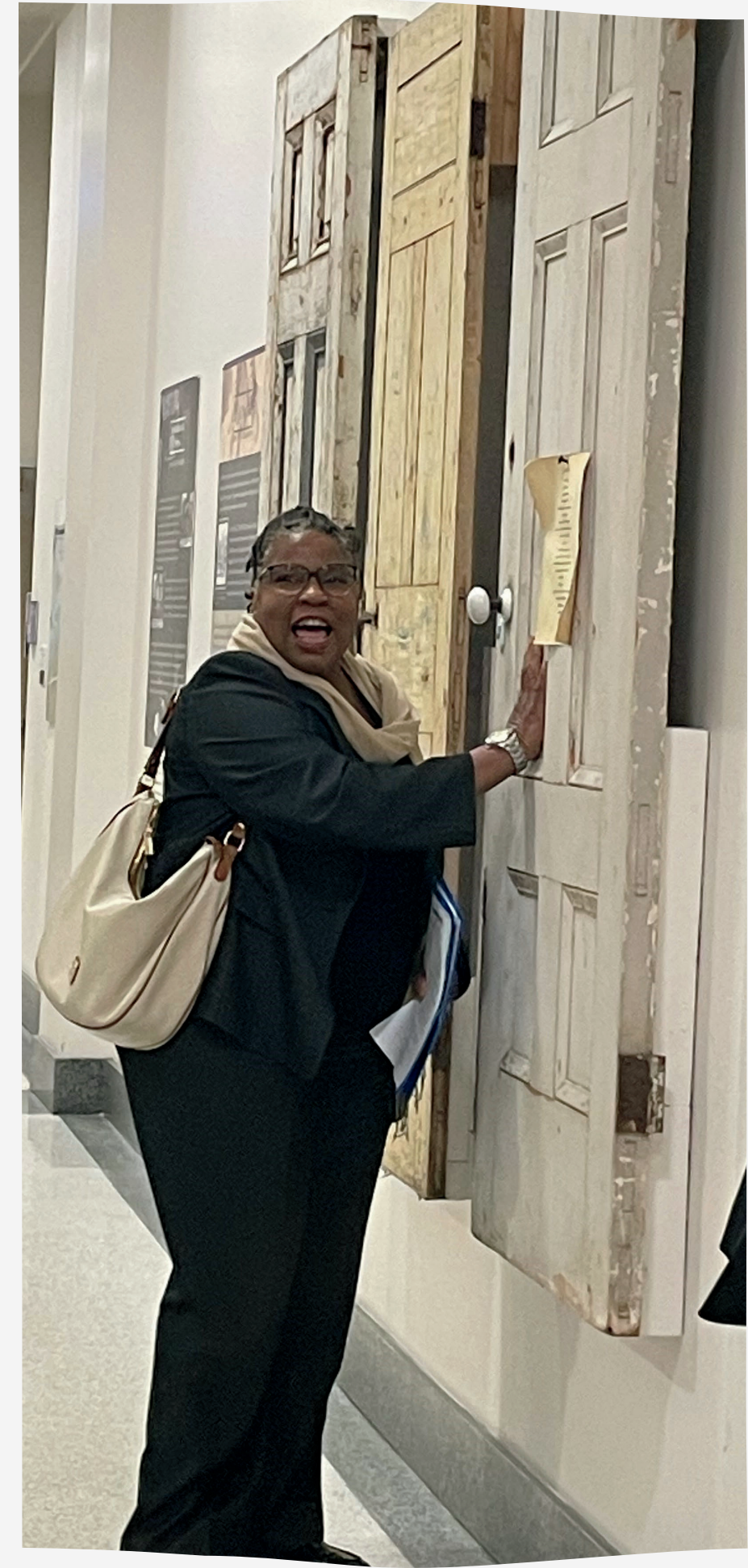


Strategy Screen - Testing Your Ideas

Thinking as your organization:

- Pick an idea.
- Use strategy screen.

What's your score?





**Once you know it's a good
program (or event), how can you
move forward with planning?**



Before you put the program on the calendar...

Strategy

- What are the objectives/goals of this event?
- How will this program fit into your current calendar?
- Determine target audience.
- Determine program type.
- Determine frequency and timing of program.

Staffing

- Determine who is primarily responsible for program's success.
- Determine planning team.
- Determine ongoing staffing plan.

Program Development

- Secure location.
- Determine how you will measure success and gather feedback from participants.
- Determine if this is a program that can run concurrently with other programs/tours or if you need the entire museum space.

Before you put the program on the calendar...

Marketing

- Determine date, time, and frequency of program.
- Draft a brief description of the program.
- Officially put it on your museum's calendar.
- Design a flyer or graphics to help promote program.

Funding

- Decide if event is free or if there will be a fee.
- Determine budget.
- Identify sources of funding.
- Draft grant requests. *(optional)*
- Determine if there's an opportunity to do something special for members in conjunction with this event. *(optional)*

At least two months out...

Marketing

- Post on website, community calendars, and social media.
- If program has a niche audience, do direct outreach. (*optional*)

Staffing

- Determine how you will staff the event.
- Begin securing program volunteers. (*optional*)

Funding

- Figure out options if initial ideas for funding don't come through.
- Determine break-even point.

Program Development

- Identify possible risks and develop strategies to minimize risks.
- Determine any A/V needs.
- Plan program activities.
- If event is primarily outdoors, determine rain plan. (*optional*)
- Determine RSVP process. (*optional*)
- Determine set-up needs.

One month out...

Marketing

- Include in e-newsletter and/or social media.

Staffing

- Find someone to take pictures at the program.
- Determine set-up/clean up schedule and who will help.

Funding

- Follow up with donors/sponsors.
- Create acknowledgement signage. (*optional*)
- Check expenses and income.

Program Development

- Finalize schedule for the program.
- Secure supplies for program activities.
- Begin selling tickets or accepting RSVPs. (*optional*)
- Develop tools to measure success and capture feedback.

Week of...

Marketing

- Post on social media, e-newsletter, etc.
- Have a program calendar ready for program participants to take home with them.

Program Development

- Produce any event signage.
- Tidy up the museum and all public areas.
- Make contingency plans in case attendance is either well above or well below expectations.
(*optional*)
- Make sure tools are in place to collect needed data.

Staffing

- Confirm volunteers.
- Confirm program plan.

The aftermath...

Marketing

- Post program recap on social media and/or e-newsletters.
- Beginning promoting the next offering of the program.

Staffing

- Set a debrief meeting to evaluate the event.
- Thank volunteers.

Funding

- Send thank you notes to donors or sponsors.
- Update budget with actual income and expenses.

Program Development

- Make notes to help plan future programs.
- Determine if program or something like it is worth repeating.
- Analyze and discuss collected data and feedback.
- Use data to make any needed changes to future programs.

Project Fundraising

- National level
- State level
 - CT Humanities
- Regional level
 - Community foundations
 - Chambers of commerce
 - Community partners
- Organizational level
 - Board
 - Members



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Learn More: CT250.org

