2024 Program Guidelines and Timeline

About the Program

Community History participants work closely with their communities to learn about and share their untold stories. Participants receive instruction on public history practices, develop projects in a collaborative environment, and receive funding from NJCH to launch projects in their communities.

The emphasis of the program is on learning. That means we do not expect participants to have any prior history training or knowledge. The program is intended to teach participants how to develop a community-engaged public history project. Learning how to do historical research, meeting others who do this type of work, and having the opportunity to pilot projects in a low-stakes, cohort-supported environment will better prepare participants to apply for future grants from NJCH and outside organizations, should they wish to do so.

Who is eligible to be part of Community History?

Community History is open to New Jersey-based organizations that either do not have a history-based mission (such as community groups, arts organizations, or social service organizations) OR have a history-based mission but no professional staff (such as volunteer-run historical societies or history museums).

Organizations may be nonprofits or entities of state or local government. Individuals and for-profit organizations may not apply to be part of Community History, though they may participate as partners of an eligible institution. Past participants have included libraries, arts organizations, social service agencies, neighborhood associations, and small historical societies. You can see a list of past organizations participants (and learn about the projects they created!) on the NJCH website.

Program Components

Community History 2024 will consist of a 3-part, step-by-step structure designed to take participants through the basics of conducting community-engaged public history, the development of a project, and ultimately launching the project in their community. Program activities will include both in-person and virtual sessions.

Organizations that are interested in applying for Community History should review these guidelines as well as the detailed timeline below to ensure that this year's program fits their schedule. Participation

requires a significant investment in time! On average, participants spend approximately 2 hours per week on Community History work, regardless of whether that week includes a formal program activity.

Part 1: Learning Intensive (March-June 2024)

The program kicks off with two in-person workshops that will take place over the course of a full day (approximately 10:00 am – 4:00 pm) at a location TBD (as central as possible to the selected participants):

- Workshop 1: What is community-engaged public history?
- Workshop 2: Public history "how to": research, story gathering, and interpretation.

These two in-person workshops will provide foundational information on how public historians think about history, introduce participants to practitioners around the state (including past Community History participants), and give participants the opportunity to get to know both their fellow cohort members and the NJCH staff who run this project.

The two in-person workshops will be followed by virtual workshops (on Zoom) that take place roughly monthly on topics that will help participants develop and eventually implement their own Community History projects. The exact agenda for sessions will be finalized based on particular needs and interests of participating organizations but will include the following topics:

- Centering community access and accessibility in your work.
- Ways to evaluate your project's success.
- Developing a project plan and budget.
- Marketing and communicating your project.

All Community History participants receive an award of $1,000 to defray the costs associated with participating in the learning and project development portions of this program.

Part 2: Project Development (July-September 2024)

Once cohort members have completed the learning sessions, the time comes to focus on the development of their organizations' Community History projects. We will take a break from intensive learning to allow organizations to go back into their communities to develop a project that explores some aspect of their own communities' histories. During this time, we will schedule individual meetings with Community History staff to support project development, brainstorm, and answer questions. We will also host monthly (optional) group meetings that are invaluable opportunities to get feedback from other cohort members.

At the end of this period, participants will have completed a project plan and budget to pilot their Community History projects. The full cohort will meet in-person in September to present these final project plans and budgets for feedback and approval.

Part 3: Pilot Projects (October 2024-October 2025)

All Community History participants can receive an additional award up to $5,000 to pilot the projects developed through the program. Participants have up to a year following approval to complete the pilot and spend the award funding. Following the pilot period, program participants will be required to

submit a final report on project activities and outcomes, as well as a budget report detailing spending. Participants' projects will be featured on NJCH's website. We also hope to create an opportunity for cohort members to share their projects and meet with previous cohort members and others who care about community-engaged public history at a date and location TBD.

Throughout the program, participant organizations will have the option to attend regular one-on-one meetings with NJCH program staff. The cohort will also be introduced to the Community History Advisory Board, composed of previous program participants, who will also serve as a resource to them throughout the program.

We strongly recommend that participants reserve two hours per week for Community History work, even in weeks where there is not an official learning session or other meeting, to ensure that participants have allocated enough time to get program assignments done.

Who should participate?

While any number of participants can contribute to an organization's project, organizations must commit to having at least one, and preferably 2-3, project team members represented at all program sessions, activities, and meetings. Participants may be staff members, volunteers, board members, or anyone else who is interested in history-based work and cares about their organizations.

Please check the list of important dates to ensure that your organization will be able to fully participate in the program. We hope that the skill-building work of these cohorts will translate into long-term benefits for the organization.

What kind of funding is provided?

Community History is _not_ a grant program. The emphasis of this program is on skill-building, project development, and cohort support. It requires participants to follow a specific course of learning, do related assignments, and build a project using the model of this program.

All participating organizations receive a $1,000 award at the beginning of the program to support the significant investment of time required for program activities and project development. Participants are encouraged to use this funding for the time, travel, and resources required to attend sessions, work on assignments, and coordinate meetings with their community.

In additionally, each participant organization that completes the program is eligible to receive a second award of up to $5,000 from NJCH to pilot their Community History project in the 12 months following the conclusion of the program, pending approval of the project plan and budget by the cohort and NJCH program staff. Organizations may opt out of piloting their project if they do not have the capacity to do that work.

2024 Application Process

If you have reviewed these guidelines and think that Community History might be right for you, we encourage you to submit an application by the January 17 due date. Here is how it's done:

1. Click the "Apply" link on the website, which will take you to NJCH's award application and administration portal. Sign in if you have already have an account or create one using your email address if you don't. If you are creating a new account, you will need to fill in some basic organizational information.
2. Select 2024 Community History to begin your application.
3. Answer all the questions required in the application to the best of your ability. Please keep in mind that you do not need a clear project idea to apply – in fact, it's better if you don't! We are interested in hearing why you want to participate in this program and why history is important to you and your community.
4. Sign up for an interview with NJCH program staff. This is required for all applicants, as it will give us an opportunity to talk with you about your interest in the program and answer any questions you have.

All applicants will be notified by February 9 whether or not they have been accepted into the program. Please note: in the past three years that we have run this program, the majority of applicants have been accepted. Don't hesitate to throw your hat in the ring!

Important Dates

Please note that all program dates (March-September) will be finalized once the cohort members are in place. We will do our best to be flexible to the schedules of participants, though it is always a challenge to schedule for a large group of people! Your flexibility in turn is appreciated.

January 17	Applications due
January 26	Interviews with applicants complete
February 9	Notification of acceptance
February 12-March 4	Onboarding meetings with accepted organizations
March 6, 7, or 8 (exact date TBD)	In-person workshop 1 (10am-4pm)
March 20, 21, or 22	In-person workshop 2 (10am-4pm)
Week of April 8	Learning Session 3 (Zoom, 2 hours)
Week of May 6	Learning Session 4 (Zoom, 2 hours)
Week of May 29	Learning Session 5 (Zoom or in person, 2 hours)
Week of June 24	Learning Session 6 (Zoom, 2 hours)
July-August	Required individual meeting and optional group meeting, 1 hour each (Zoom)
September	In-person project approval session and cohort celebration
October 2024-October 2025	Pilot project period