2027 PROGRAM GUIDELINES

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Community History participants work closely with their communities to learn about and share their stories. Participants receive instruction on public history practices and community-engagement methods and develop projects in a collaborative environment. Accepted organizations receive a $1,000 award at the start of the program to fund their participation. Organizations that participate in *all* program activities are eligible to apply for up to $5,000 in additional funding from NJCH to launch projects in their communities following the conclusion of the program.

Community History emphasizes learning: we do not expect participants to have prior history training or experience. Learning how to do historical research, meeting history practitioners, and developing and piloting projects in a low-stakes, supportive environment will prepare participants to continue to engage with history-based work after the program, 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, libraries, arts or social service organizations) OR have a history-based mission but no professional staff (such as volunteer-run historical societies or 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 participants (and learn about the projects they created!) on the NJCH website.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The program is designed to take participants through the basics of conducting community-engaged public history, the development of a project, and launching the project in their community. Program activities will include both in-person and virtual sessions.

Organizations interested in applying for Community History should review these guidelines and the detailed timeline below to ensure this year's program fits their schedule. Participation requires a significant investment of time. On average, participants spend approximately 2 hours per week on Community History work, regardless of whether that week includes a formal program meeting or activity.

Organizations that do not participate in program activities will not be considered for project funding.

Part 1: Learning Sessions (February-June 2027)

The program kicks off with two in-person workshops that will take place over the course of two full days (approximately 10:00 am – 3:00 pm each day) at a location central to the cohort:

- Session 1: Community History Foundations
- Session 2: Community Engagement and Outreach

These two sessions will provide foundational information on community-engaged public history, introduce participants to practitioners around the state, and give participants the opportunity to get to know both their fellow cohort members and the NJCH staff who run this program.

The two in-person workshops will be followed by three monthly meetings that take place via Zoom on Friday mornings. These sessions will provide training on community history methods and explore topics and case studies that will help participants develop and implement their own Community History projects. Topics include:

- Oral history, story gathering, and community archiving
- Partnerships and outreach
- Cross-disciplinary projects
- Public memory

These learning sessions conclude with an in-person session that will provide a bridge to project development, preparing participants to do the deep work with their communities to create a new community-engaged public history project.

Part 2: Project Development (July-August 2026)

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

At the end of this period, participants will have completed a project plan and budget. The full cohort will meet in-person in September to present project proposals for feedback and celebrate successful completion of the program.

Part 3: Pilot Projects (October 2027-September 2028)

Organizations who have attended all sessions and participated in all program activities are eligible to apply for an 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. Program participants must submit an interim report and final report on project activities and outcomes and a budget report detailing spending. Participants' projects will be featured on NJCH's website upon completion.

Throughout the program, participant organizations can 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 serve as a resource to them throughout the program. NJCH staff often introduces participants to other practitioners with similar objectives or experience to serve as mentors and cheerleaders.

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE?

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 interested in contributing to your project and attending program events. The opportunity to apply for project funding is contingent on participation.

Check the list of important dates to ensure that your organization can fully participate in the program. We hope that the skill-building work that is foundational to 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 use this funding for the time, travel, and resources required to attend sessions, work on assignments, and coordinate meetings with their community.

In addition, each participant organization that completes the program is eligible to apply for a second award of up to $5,000 from NJCH to pilot their Community History project in the year following the program, pending approval of their project plan and budget by the cohort and NJCH staff. While all organizations must create a project and plan, they may opt out of piloting their project and receiving the additional award.

While participating organizations have much better odds of receiving funding through Community History than more competitive grant cycles, they must commit to participating in all program activities to be eligible to apply for project funding.

2027 APPLICATION PROCESS

If you reviewed these guidelines and think Community History might be right for you, we encourage you to apply by the December 3 due date. Here is how it's done:

1. Click the "Apply Now" link on the Community History page of NJCH's website, which will take you to the application and administration portal. Sign in if you have already have an account or create one using your email address. If you are creating a new account, you will need to fill in some basic organizational information.
2. Select "2027 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 is 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 a 30-minute interview, which are available from October 1-December 11. 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. You may have your interview before or after submitting your application.

All applicants will be notified by early January if they have been accepted into the program. Please note: In the past five 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

2027 program dates have been set in advance so that applicants and potential participants can begin scoping out their calendars now. 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. All workshops and learning sessions will be held on Fridays.

Info session (virtual)	October 14
Application due	December 3
Interviews open	October 1-December 11
Notification of acceptance	By early January
Cohort introductory meeting (virtual)	January (exact date TBD)
Session 1 – in person, 10:00-3:00 (location TBD)	February 26
Session 2 – in person, 10:00-3:00 (location TBD)	March 12
Session 3 – virtual, 10:00-noon	April 2
Session 4 – virtual, 10:00-noon	April 30
Session 5 – virtual, 10:00-noon	May 21
Session 6 – in person, 10:00-3:00 (location TBD)	June 11
Participant meetings (individual)	July and August
Project proposals due	September 3
Final session (presentations & celebration)	September 17 or 24
Pilot Project Period	October 2027-September 2028
Interim & final reports due	Midway through project period
Final reports due	60 days after close of project period