



**AASLH**  
American Association  
for State and Local History

**StEPs**

Standards and Excellence Program  
for History Organizations

*A Program of the American Association for State and Local History*

## StEPs Resources for Field Service Programs and other Service Providers

FSA Members: Did you know that [StEPs](#) offers materials and resources for you to use as you work with local history organizations in your state? Check out the resources below—some are for you and some are for the organizations you serve.

StEPs Resource	How to Access
General information	<a href="http://tools.aaslh.org/steps/">http://tools.aaslh.org/steps/</a>
Brochure	Contact Cherie Cook <a href="mailto:cook@aaslh.org">cook@aaslh.org</a> (specify quantity needed)
Workbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hard copy: Purchase via AASLH bookstore <a href="http://about.aaslh.org/aaslh-bookstore/">http://about.aaslh.org/aaslh-bookstore/</a></li><li>• Straight text (for cutting/pasting large segments of text): contact Cherie Cook at <a href="mailto:cook@aaslh.org">cook@aaslh.org</a></li><li>• pdf version: accessible in StEPs Community</li><li>• Sample workbook page: contact Cherie Cook</li></ul>
<b>StEPs Community</b> (offers sample documents, policies, job descriptions, resources, links, discussions, etc.)	<a href="http://www.stepscommunity.org">www.stepscommunity.org</a> When creating your username and password enter invitation code Da4Cj7o (case-sensitive and make sure there are no spaces before or after it). <i>Please do not share the link or code with others as the site is only for museums that have paid the StEPs enrollment fee (plus a few others like FSA colleagues)</i>
<b>Short info video, “Why Enroll in StEPs”</b> (under 4 min.) suitable for potential StEPs participants, boards of directors, etc.	<a href="http://tools.aaslh.org/what-is-steps/">http://tools.aaslh.org/what-is-steps/</a>
Webinar: “What is StEPs?” (57 min.)	Recording of one-hour online event. Available on-demand and free at <a href="http://go.aaslh.org/jznbi">http://go.aaslh.org/jznbi</a>
Most current StEPs enrollment report for your state	Contact Cherie Cook <a href="mailto:cook@aaslh.org">cook@aaslh.org</a>
Most current list of StEPs certificate recipients	<a href="http://tools.aaslh.org/steps-certificate-recipients/">http://tools.aaslh.org/steps-certificate-recipients/</a>

StEPs Resource	How to Access
"Are You Ready for StEPs?"	<a href="http://tools.aaslh.org/who-is-steps-for/">http://tools.aaslh.org/who-is-steps-for/</a>
"Telling a Good Story" webinar. A good guided tour is a good story told well, says guest speaker Linda Norris. 75 min.	StEPs participants and FSA members can access this free webinar recording in the StEPs Community. All others pay \$15 (members) or \$30 (nonmembers) thru AASLH website.
"Creating Historic House Interpretive Plans that Connect" webinar. Interpretive plans that connect with visitors are the keystone for a positive experience. Nancy Bryk discusses how research is an integral part of the process. 90 min.	StEPs participants and FSA members can access is webinar recording for free in the StEPs Community. All others pay \$15 (members) or \$30 (nonmembers) thru AASLH website.
"Redefining Audiences" webinar. Who are your current audiences and how can you engage new ones? Looking at the most recent US Census, Susie Wilkening of Reach Advisors discusses demographic change and the ways in which history organizations can use valuable census data. 76 min.	StEPs participants and FSA members can access is webinar recording for free in the StEPs Community. All others pay \$15 (members) or \$30 (nonmembers) thru AASLH website.
"Hope Is Not a Strategy: Fundraising in Tough Times" webinar. Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, discusses the importance of demystifying potential funding resources and sticking to your mission. Marianne Bez shares tools on assessing your membership program and encouraging renewals. Linda Norris highlights new online fundraising tools and how they may benefit organizations of any size. 93 min.	StEPs participants and FSA members can access is webinar recording for free in the StEPs Community. All others pay \$15 (members) or \$30 (nonmembers) thru AASLH website.
"Juggling Balls and Other High Wire Acts: How a Well-crafted Collections Management Policy Can be the Safety Net that Saves Your Collections" webinar. JoAnn Lindstrom demonstrates how to use a collections management policy to help make and enforce difficult decisions. 74 min.	StEPs participants and FSA members can access is webinar recording for free in the StEPs Community. All others pay \$15 (members) or \$30 (nonmembers) thru AASLH website.
"Roadmap or Wheel of Fortune? Which Would You Stake Your Organization's Future On?" webinar. Anne Ackerson explores the importance of defining and evaluating organizational impact through strategic thinking and planning. 75 min.	StEPs participants and FSA members can access is webinar recording for free in the StEPs Community. All others pay \$15 (members) or \$30 (nonmembers) thru AASLH website.

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<p>Workshop curriculum packages:</p> <p>“Building a Meaningful Collection”  <a href="http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-building-a-meaningful-collection/">http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-building-a-meaningful-collection/</a></p> <p>“Charting Your Organization’s Course for the Future”  <a href="http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-charting-your-organizations-course-for-the-future/">http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-charting-your-organizations-course-for-the-future/</a></p> <p>“Money Matters: Building Better Budgets for Small Museums”  <a href="http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-money-matters-better-budgets-for-small-museums/">http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-money-matters-better-budgets-for-small-museums/</a></p> <p>“Understanding Audiences and Visitors”  <a href="http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-understanding-audiences-and-visitors/">http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-understanding-audiences-and-visitors/</a></p> <p>“The ‘Accidental’ Parlor: Balancing Museum Needs in Historic Structures “  <a href="http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-accidental-parlor-balancing-museum-needs-in-historic-structures/">http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-accidental-parlor-balancing-museum-needs-in-historic-structures/</a></p> <p>“Can You Hear Me Now? Connecting to Visitors Through Real Stories of Artifacts and Place”  <a href="http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-can-you-hear-me-now-connecting-to-visitors-through-real-stories-of-artifacts-and-place/">http://resource.aaslh.org/view/course-curriculum-can-you-hear-me-now-connecting-to-visitors-through-real-stories-of-artifacts-and-place/</a></p>	<p>Curriculum packages are available free of charge to help service organizations present workshops. Each package includes instructor’s guide, PowerPoint slides and handouts for a one-day workshop (approx. 6.5 hours). You are free to adapt all materials to meet your needs. We only ask that credit be given to StEPs/AASLH and information about StEPs be presented at the beginning of each workshop. Funding for the curricula series provided by IMLS.</p>

For the past several years, AASLH has encouraged formation of state-based StEPs communities of practice. This initiative is based on evaluative data and feedback collected when AASLH piloted StEPs seven years ago. A number of the 47 test sites reported that interaction with other museums and sites and with a state or regional museum association or other service organization greatly enhanced their experience and progress.

As with many other support group models, realizing that other museums and sites share the same challenges and concerns as your organization is not only validating but empowering. Often, staff and volunteers at small history organizations feel isolated especially if they are the only museum or site in their community. Joining a StEPs community of practice can make a huge difference because it offers networking, shared learning, and an accountability mechanism that promotes progress.

Here’s what is going on in states where a StEPs group has formed or efforts are being made to start one:

- The longest running and most structured is sponsored by Connecticut Humanities and the Connecticut League of History Organizations. StEPs-CT offers professional development, facilitated conversation, and mentorship opportunities. Organizations that complete the two-year program receive exclusive access to competitive grant funds. The program served twenty-

four organizations from 2012-14. Those organizations earned a total of 116 Bronze, Silver or Gold certificates (40% of all StEPs certificates awarded nationwide!) and, upon completion of the two-year program, received over \$45,000 in grants. In 2015, twenty-three new organizations embarked on their StEPs-CT journey and Connecticut Historical Society now helps as a partner organization. For more information, contact Scott Wands or Liz Shapiro.

- The King County, Washington-based organization, 4Culture, has created StEPs 4Culture that combines professional development, training, mentorship, peer support, and incentive-based funding all structured around StEPs. Fifty organizations in the Seattle area have taken part in convenings, roundtables, mentor opportunities, and other activities. Contact Brian Carter.
- In Tennessee, AASLH received funding from the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee to work with five history organizations beginning in 2012. Grant funding was renewed twice. Although the project officially ended in late 2015, the group continues to network and meet quarterly. Contact Bethany Hawkins for more information.
- StEPs for Ohio is an initiative of Ohio History Connection. The OHC Local History Office is working with AmeriCorps workers to offer workshops, webinars, and one-on-one consulting. The goal for StEPs for Ohio is to help participating local history organizations gain solid footing in the program by earning the six Bronze certificates within a two-year time period. For more information, contact Mark Sundlov.
- In Carmel, Indiana, Hamilton County's Education Leadership Program for Heritage Organizations (HELP) is using StEPs to improve sustainability of local heritage organizations. The initiative is sponsored and funded by Hamilton County Tourism. The Indiana Historical Society is assisting with the program. Nine heritage organizations are taking part in workshops and consultations over a three-year period. Contact Allan Rowe for more information.
- In the past two years, Humanities Nebraska has provided funding for more than ten history organizations to enroll in StEPs. The organizations will meet at the 2016 Nebraska Museums Association meeting. Also, the North Carolina Humanities Council has funded StEPs enrollment for organizations that have participated in the MoMS traveling exhibits program.
- Utah Humanities History and Museums Program Office Megan van Frank working with Jennifer Ortiz, Museum Specialist with the Utah Division of Arts and Museums, use StEPs materials in conjunction with the Utah Performance Goals Program.
- Beginning with its 2016 grant cycle, the New Jersey Historical Commission now requires that grant applicants be involved in an assessment program like StEPs. The Commission is also using StEPs to help it identify history organizations' most pressing needs across the state.
- Chester County Historical Society, Westchester, PA, in partnership with the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts is guiding a small group of local history organizations through StEPs. The Alabama Department of Archives and History is also working with a small group on StEPs.

Has a StEPs group formed in your state? If so, please send information about it to Cherie Cook at [cook@aaslh.org](mailto:cook@aaslh.org) or contact Cherie with questions you have about starting a StEPs group. [All information current as of Feb. 2016]