



Call for Working Group Discussants
NCPH Annual Meeting
March 26-29, 2025
Montréal, Québec, Canada

What are NCPH Working Groups?

Working groups, involving up to six facilitators and up to twelve discussants, allow conferees to explore in depth a subject of shared concern before and during the annual meeting. In these seminar-like conversations, participants have a chance to discuss questions raised by specific programs, problems, or initiatives in their own public history practice with peers grappling with similar issues. Working groups articulate a purpose they are working toward or a problem they are actively trying to solve. They aim to create an end product(s), such as a report, article, website, or exhibition.

2025 Working Groups

For 2025, ten working groups are seeking discussants:

1. AAPI Public History: Outcomes from the Past Year, Exploring International Opportunities
2. Creating a Peer-Review Clearinghouse for Public Historians
3. Decolonial Approaches to America 250
4. Doing Queer History in a Hostile Political Climate
5. Exploring Best Practices in Public Lands History
6. Public Historians, Empathetic People: Building Humane Leadership and Work Cultures
7. Public History Volunteer Management: Challenges, Opportunities, and Best Practices
8. Solid Succession: Considering Succession Planning and Institutional DNA at Historic Organizations
9. Women in Public History
10. Who is Missing in Public History Workspaces? Developing BIPOC Career Pathways

To apply to join one of these working groups, please [fill out the form](#) describing the issues you wish to raise with your peers, together with a one-page resume, CV, or biographical statement, by **October 15, 2024**. We welcome submissions from individuals across a range of professions and career stages. Please see the specific working group descriptions below. Individuals who are selected will be listed as working group discussants in the conference *Program* and will participate in the working group session at the annual meeting.

Expectations

This fall the group facilitators will ask discussants to contribute a 500-1,000-word case statement. The case statement will describe a discussant's particular experience, define the issues this experience raises, and suggest strategies and/or goals for resolution. Case statements will be circulated among participants and posted to the NCPH website. Discussants are expected to read and provide written comments on one another's case statements well before the conference date. Some working groups may also have additional shared background reading materials identified by their facilitators or may choose to open case statements for wider public input. Discussants are expected to meet in person next March at the National Council on Public History's annual meeting in Montréal.

To apply

Please fill out the [discussant application form](#), making sure to select which working group you are applying to join. (You may apply to participate in a working group whether or not you have submitted another presentation or session proposal. You may apply for only one working group.) All working group discussants are expected to register and pay for the annual meeting within six weeks of acceptance.

Apply at <http://ncph.org/conference/working-group-discussant-application/>

About the 2025 Working Groups

AAPI Public History Working Group: Outcomes from the Past Year, Exploring International Opportunities

Facilitators: Marian Carpenter, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Priya Chhaya, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Andre Kobayashi Deckrow, University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
Eric Hung, Music of Asian America Research Center
Selena Moon, University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
Lily Tamai, California State University
Michael Yee, San Diego Miramar College and San Diego Chinese Historical Museum

This working group extends the work of the 2024 AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) public history working group and broadens the scope to exploring Asian histories and perspectives through international and transnational lenses. The initial discussants will share their expertise, projects and past successes, approaches, and ideas in the fields of museums, historic sites, academia, public history instruction, community partnerships, digital history, and cultural tourism. With honor to our host city of Montréal, we specifically are seeking new discussants for the working group's second year who represent Asian Canadian and international themes of public history.

Questions the group may consider include:

- What outcomes and collaborations resulted from the AAPI Working Group (WG4) session at the annual meeting in Salt Lake City in April 2024?
- How can public historians collaborate nationally and internationally with other cultural groups and communities of color to stress historic preservation as a way to encourage understanding, challenging historic narratives and building supportive relationships?
- Are there ways this group in the US and Canada can collaborate? Can a joint US-Canada history exhibit/website be developed?
- How do approaches focusing on Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) public history complement and differ from Asian Canadian public history, international public history, and transnational perspectives?

- How does AAPI public history align with or differ from AAPI historic preservation efforts and approaches? (Facilitators from the National Trust for Historic Preservation will inform the participants of current projects and efforts and solicit input.)

Creating a Peer-Review Clearinghouse for Public Historians

Facilitators: Clarissa Ceglio, Greenhouse Studios, University of Connecticut
 Kathleen Powers Conti, Florida State University
 Elizabeth Fraterrigo, Loyola University Chicago
 Michelle Hamilton, Western University Canada

This working group aims to develop a sustainable clearinghouse to facilitate peer review for publicly engaged scholarship. Regardless of institutional setting, public historians have a need for peer review. Such assessments may range from those that provide critical feedback during a formative phase of work to evaluation and documentation of a completed project or body of work. Building on discussions begun on NCPH's ph-educators list-serv and continued at the 2024 conference, this group will bring together participants from within and outside academia to create a system for securing and providing the peer review so essential to public history practice and career advancement. Prior to the annual meeting, the working group will convene to gather information, strategize, and develop a proposal, publicizing our efforts and soliciting feedback through such channels as *History@Work* and the ph-educators list-serv, with a view to piloting the process in time to report out at the annual meeting.

Decolonial Approaches to America 250

Facilitator: Rebecca Amato, Illinois Humanities

2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the United States' Declaration of Independence, a document that announced to the world that thirteen British colonies in North America had formed into a unified, sovereign nation. Preparations are underway to commemorate and celebrate "America 250," and public history and humanities organizations are already developing guidelines for approaching the event. This working group plans to develop alternative guidelines that center a discourse of postcoloniality and imagine new solidarities for the nation's future.

In a moment of polarizing politics, TikTok attention spans, and binary analyses of US history, there may be a tendency to deliver easy narratives on the meaning and legacies of the Declaration. As public historians, we are called upon to counter these tendencies, while recognizing the deep longing for hope and reassurance that this anniversary can evoke.

Postcolonial framing allows us to highlight historical and regional specificity; different concepts and uneven experiences of independence, freedom, and liberation; and new visions of nationhood that are inclusive, imaginative, reparative, and grounded in honesty. Among the questions we ask are:

- How do we commemorate the Declaration if we are organizing programming in a state or territory that was one of the original British colonies? How do we do so if our state or territory was not colonized or part of a different colonial project in 1776?

- How do we approach the Declaration if we are descended from peoples who were excluded from the promise of democracy (i.e. Native people, enslaved Africans, etc.)?
- How might we envision a Declaration of Independence for the next 250 years that includes 20th/21st c. thinking about postcoloniality, the work of decolonization, activism and scholarship around liberation, and futurisms (Afrofuturism, Indigenous Futurism, Latinx futurism, etc.)

This working group may be relevant to staff of state humanities councils, national or regional history councils, museum or historical society programmers and educators, and scholars. The most likely outcomes of our collaboration will be a best practices guide, searchable database, and/or a series of articles for the *History@Work* blog. However, we will determine these goals collectively once the group is formed.

Doing Queer History in a Hostile Political Climate

Facilitators: Caroline Dugan, Stonewall National Museum, Archives, and Library
Marissa Petrou, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

This working group is dedicated to sharing and developing strategies of resilience for doing queer history in a hostile political climate. While the southern US has been the focus of much media coverage of anti Queer legislation and local acts of harm, we recognize that this is a national issue beyond our region. We are interested in creating a reference database of previous advocacy goals related to preserving Queer history and interpreting Queer history, and successful and failed strategies for achieving these goals.

We are looking to create a safe space for productive discussion about the trauma that members of our community are currently facing and how this should impact the programming and mission statement of organizations devoted to preserving Queer history. What role do sites for preserving and sharing Queer history have in today's society in the context of the current hostile political climate?

The specific impetus for organizing this working group is the recognition of the mental health consequences that this hostile political climate is having on our community, while also recognizing that we as public historians are not trained therapists nor hired as therapists in our positions as historians. Yet as archivists connected to public facing organizations, we have often succeeded in making ourselves visible to younger queer generations who are looking for spaces and places to thrive, to be vulnerable, to heal.

This working group will ask: what does solidarity look like when practicing queer public history? And how do we make it sustainable? The finished product we would work toward is a series of articles for the blog, *History@Work*. We are also interested in creating a reference database of previous advocacy goals related to preserving Queer history and interpreting Queer history, and successful and failed strategies for achieving these goals.

Exploring Best Practices in Public Lands History

Facilitators: Alexandra Mosquin, Parks Canada
Gregory Smoak, University of Utah
Joan Zenzen, Independent public historian

Public historians know that public lands managers must consider history when making decisions about public lands, but sometimes history is left out. This working group has three goals: to find ways to advocate for public history in public lands management; develop a best practices list for public historians; and develop a bibliography of model scholarship. Participants will join in solidarity to share experiences in working with public lands managers, conducting research, and writing and/or contributing to management documents.

Questions for the group to consider include:

- How has historical thinking about public lands evolved? What is new?
- How have Indigenous histories and perspectives been addressed and is this sufficient?
- In what ways can community-based research contribute?
- How are public lands distinctive sites of historical enquiry?
- To what extent should climate change be addressed?
- What models of public history projects on public lands stand out?
- What are go-to resources for public lands management?
- How does oral history contribute to this work?
- How can public historians advocate for the value of their skills to public lands managers?

The facilitators of this working group invite everyone passionate about this field and at different phases in their careers to join us in solidarity to share their perspectives on public lands history. We invite experienced practitioners, land managers, academics, those working for governments, history consultants, and interested grad students to join the conversation.

[Public Historians, Empathetic People: Building Humane Leadership and Work Cultures](#)

Facilitators: Aja Bain, American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)

Ann Bennett, Laurel Historical Society

Janna Bennett, Carnegie Museum of Montgomery County

Andrea Jones, AASLH History Leadership Institute

Araceli Hernandez, Curator of Education, History Nebraska

Maria Quintero, JFK Presidential Library and Museum

Helen Turner, St. Louis Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum

This working group, whose facilitators are drawn from AASLH's 2024 History Leadership Institute cohort, will discuss the evolution of leadership skills and training in the public history field and how social movements, DEAI, and trauma-informed practices have shaped this revolution. Focusing on democratizing work cultures and empowering leaders at all levels, this group will imagine a more humane and inclusive future for our field that fosters sustainability and diversity. Perspectives from all types of sites will offer case studies on humane leadership at work, bringing our mission and values into action internally, and the possibilities of a nuanced and humanistic leadership paradigm.

Building up a workforce that is healthy, more resilient, and that values empathy, compassion, and mutual respect can approach immediate and future issues in the field. Working group participants should seek to be part of a workforce that is better equipped to begin to tackle new and long-established problems within public history, including but not limited to the challenges of diversifying the field to better represent the country, maintaining support and collaboration among colleagues in

increasingly remote or hybrid work structure, addressing the pace and expectations that burn out many professionals, and moving away from entrenched models towards more ethical hiring and working practices that can combat patriarchy, white supremacy, xenophobia, colonialism, and bigotry.

Topics for discussion will include:

- Empathetic leadership: centering emotional intelligence and self-awareness to create more opportunities for internal collaboration within the workplace and for meaningful external partnerships.
- Democratizing the workplace: leading no matter where you are in an organization's hierarchy, and supporting collaborative leadership models.
- Cultivating leaders from a wide range of roles: developing leaders who trust and solicit the expertise of all levels of staff and see the power of promoting from within and elevating leaders who have been on the front lines.
- Representative leadership: encouraging leaders who are truly representative of the communities served and the institutions led.
- Change making: providing actionable tools and resources to maximize impact from any given level of an organization by focusing on one's sphere of influence and creatively exploring how to expand it.
- Living values into practice: evaluating personal and organizational values and identifying the behaviors and practices that can help us create accountability at all stages of our professional journeys.
- Humanizing work culture: seeking to systemically address burnout culture that has historically been encouraged in the field, support individual growth, and communicating and enforcing workplace boundaries for a more enriching and sustainable workplace experience.

For our finished product, the group would pursue some kind of publication or a series of publications that could serve as resources to others looking for best practices for new models of leadership. Our primary target would be an AASLH leaflet that could be shared freely across the field and incorporated into future HLI training materials.

Public History Volunteer Management: Challenges, Opportunities, and Best Practices

Facilitators: Max Farley, Fort Pulaski National Monument, National Park Service
Karey Olson, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

Public history institutions of all shapes, missions, and sizes depend on passionate volunteers to preserve and maintain their stories. As institutions adjust to shrinking budgets, staff precarity, and changing public expectations, how should public history volunteer managers shift (or hold firm) to meet the moment as they work with their volunteers? This working group seeks to bring together public history volunteer managers at institutions of all shapes and sizes to discuss shared challenges, opportunities, and best practices, with the goal of moving towards a basic "public history volunteer management best practices guide" that is adaptable to institutional needs, equitable, and proactive. In the process, participants will begin to create an inter-institutional network of volunteer managers, planting seeds for further collaboration in this vital sector of public history work.

Solid Succession: Considering Succession Planning and Institutional DNA at Historic Organizations

Facilitators: Meghan Gelardi Holmes, Gibson House Museum / Colonial Society of Massachusetts
Marla Miller, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Many historic sites, museums, or organizations were founded as a labor of love by one or two passionate people who believed in the potential for preserving and interpreting a particular place, subject, story, or moment in time. This working group aims to explore issues around institutional DNA, succession planning, and how site founders influence the long-term mission and vision of an organization. What happens when the next generation of leaders takes over? In the process of professionalization and institutionalization, what is gained and what is lost? How and when should planning commence for solid succession?

The primary goal of this working group is to consider how institutional DNA, and especially the transition from historic site/museum/organization founder to later generations of leadership, shapes and influences the growth of different kinds of sites, in both visible and less clear ways. We want to think about how passion and institutional knowledge are transferred from one generation to the next, and to surface effective strategies for that all-important moment of initial transition from charismatic founder(s) to the successor generation.

This working group aims to serve staff, board members, and others who are wrestling with the many challenges associated with leadership succession, with focus on succession from founders. Each site or organization will experience these issues differently, and to that end, we seek geographical, generational, institutional, and other forms of diversity as we identify working group discussants.

Because we envision this working group to raise thorny issues rather than solve them, our goal is to find ways to continue and amplify the conversation that the working group initiates. A series of articles for *History@Work* is one possible outgrowth of the conversation, exploring do's, don'ts, and best practices. If enough interest is generated, the facilitators would be interested in following up on the working group with an NCPH mini-con.

We invite applications to join this working group from individuals who have experienced both successful and unsuccessful transitions, and/or who are thinking about change now. The working group will decide as a community whether or not their NCPH session will be open or closed.

Women in Public History

Facilitators: Sarah Case, *The Public Historian* and UC Santa Barbara
Caitlyn Jones, Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument
G. Samantha Rosenthal, Roanoke College
Leandra Zarnow, University of Houston

This working group addresses women and gender equity in public history along the three streams of professional, political, and historical. Our work grows out of two robustly attended NCPH sessions: an intergenerational roundtable in 2023 and an initial brainstorming session for the newly formed working group in 2024. We place women's public history as a site of intersectional innovation while strategizing

how women (an identity we broadly define) practitioners respond to a hostile, precarious labor market and political climate. In Montréal, we invite collaboration to finalize our manifesta drafted at lead-up virtual sessions and will establish clear action items consolidating prior conversations. We believe that it is time for a renewed discussion about intersectional gender equity within NCPH. We continue to grapple with our organizing question: how can we confront the persistent obstacles facing diverse women in the greater professional and public historical landscape?

This group strives for greater visibility and support for women in the public history profession. Recently, the Women's Caucus of the Alliance has been reconstituted, recognizing that although women are 46.7 percent of the museum field, there remains a pay gap and leadership gap. Additionally, professional and grassroots groups across the country have begun organizing against the growing attack on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, aiming to recognize and rectify gender exclusion in historical narratives. This working group calls for work of this kind to begin for NCPH, seeking both a space for reflection on the contributions and history of women public historians and a space for action to ensure more inclusiveness and visibility in work and scholarship. We believe that the Task Force on Gender Equity and the NCPH board-led Subcommittee on Gender Discrimination and Sexual Harassment has done important work, and we see this new effort as complementary. We hope the result of the working group will be concrete next steps to address through the areas of policy, programming, and practice.

In Montréal, we will also finalize our three-staged (short-term, intermediate, long-term) action plan in each of our focus areas: the professional, the political, and the historical. Our goal is to form committees of engaged participants who will carry each of these areas forward and report back at the next convening in 2026.

[Who is Missing in Public History Workspaces? Developing BIPOC Career Pathways](#)

Facilitators: Jessica Ellison, National Council for History Education
lara keland, University of Missouri - St. Louis
Mack Williams, III, Sumner High School Living Arts and Museum Studies Pathway

There are many barriers to recruiting and retaining a truly diverse workforce in our field, and addressing issues of equity in professional development requires a robust and multi-institutional approach. With this working group we hope to continue expanding the circle of collaborators to build a network of professionals working on this issue across the country and at different levels of education and professional development. We intend to use this space to begin forming a community of collaborators as we develop opportunities for emerging BIPOC professionals. We also intend to begin exploring the possibilities of a joint major funding ask, which would allow us to truly develop a systematic approach to this pervasive issue.

Members of the working group will first introduce to one another the array of initiatives we are currently working towards. Discussants do not need to be currently involved in existing institutional initiatives, although we especially welcome those who have some experience who do. A commitment to the work is all that is required for admission, however! After identifying common goals, we will outline some preliminary best practices and points for collaboration. Then, we will explore possible funding opportunities and create a working plan for next steps for those interested in moving forward collaboratively. It is our intention to use this year's time to explore the work that has been undertaken

and envisioned, and begin to sketch out a possible collaborative program that would allow us to work together and build a national network of public history career pathways that could give BIPOC students the exposure to careers in the field, from middle school through postgraduate scholarship. Our deliverables would include a *History@Work* post, as well as a short proposal for next steps in fundraising for the next stage of this vision. Keeping in line with this year's theme of solidarity, it's part of our intention to build an intergenerational network of professionals who are committed to opening doors for the next generation of professionals, while also ensuring that we disrupt any hidden white supremacist structures that underlie our professional pathways.