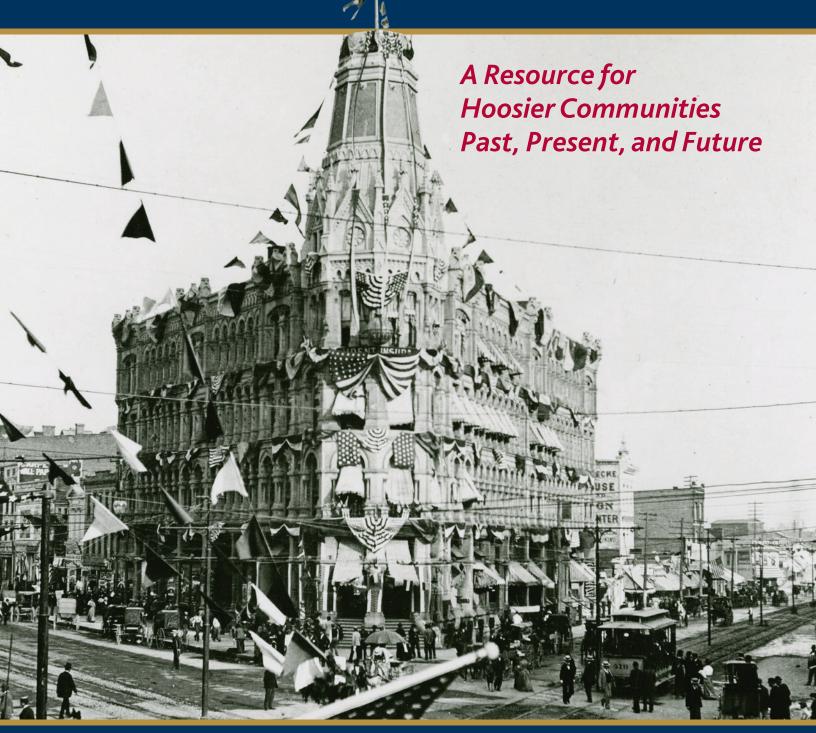
THE U.S. 250TH IN INDIANA PLANNING FRAMEWORK





Washington Street and Virginia Avenue, circa 1900
BASS PHOTO CO COLLECTION, INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



This resource is provided by the Indiana Historical Society and made possible with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

For more information, contact the IHS Local History Services department at localhistoryservices@indianahistory.org or (317) 232-1882.

For more resources and a toolkit of planning templates, visit www.indianahistory.org/LHSresources or scan the QR code below.



INTRODUCTION



he United States Semiguincentennial in 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the approval of the Declaration of Independence by the Second Continental Congress. It is an opportunity for institutions and individuals across the country to explore and to consider the past, present, and future of their communities in the context of this historic event. The U.S. 250th gives us a moment not only to celebrate the nation's founding, but also to reflect on our shared history and what it means to be an American.

A Moment for Commemoration and Celebration

The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence is a time to celebrate the achievements of the United States and of Indiana. It is also an opportunity to commemorate specific events and/ or people that have impacted our communities. It is a time to reflect on the founding principles of our country and state and note the ways in which these principles helped to build our society as well as to recognize the ways in which practice did not or has not fulfilled these aspirations.

The U.S. 250th is an opportunity to take a broad view of Indiana's history in order to acknowledge the people and events which preceded statehood. Doing history means telling the stories of a person, group, or place, understanding why things happened the way they did, and tracing their impact on the ever-unfolding sequence of history. The recounting of some historical events may provoke controversy, so it is important to base presentations on well-documented sources and to remember there is room for respectful disagreement regarding the interpretation of history.



Children Watching Veterans Day Parade INDIANAPOLIS RECORDER COLLECTION, INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Founding of the U.S. and the History of Indiana

As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America, it is important to consider the origins of our nation. On July 4, 1776, with the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, America formally proclaimed its separation from Great Britain. In the years leading up to 1776, American colonists had grown increasingly frustrated with their lack of representation in the British government. They contended they deserved a voice in the government ruling them. Consequently, when drafting the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson emphasized American colonists' beliefs that all people are entitled to the fundamental rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," and that it is the government's responsibility to uphold and protect these rights. These beliefs came from a philosophical movement prominent in the 18th century that promoted individual rights, scientific inquiry, and logic known as the Enlightenment.

The Declaration of Independence reflects the founders' commitment to Enlightenment ideals, particularly their belief in natural rights and the need for a government by the people. While the Declaration of Independence represents the ideals and principles upon which the United States was founded, the Constitution, which was written in 1787, established the framework on which it operated. Despite their apparent dedication to Enlightenment principles, America's founding fathers established a government that excluded much of the nation's population and denied rights to its most marginalized groups, including enslaved African Americans, Indigenous peoples, and women. In the centuries since 1776, Americans have fought to make the nation more aligned with the ideas laid out in the Declaration of Independence. This ongoing struggle has led to significant advancements in civil rights and constitutional amendments, but the pursuit of full equality continues.

The principles laid out in the Declaration of Independence extended beyond the original 13 colonies, as the American government was challenged with bringing new states into the Union. When the Revolutionary War formally ended in 1783 under the Treaty of Paris, American territorial boundaries expanded to include British claims to Indigenous lands. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was passed to establish orderly settlement and statehood of the territory, while also creating a process for the newly



N.W. Territory INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

formed federal government to generate earnings through land sales. A growing American population, as well as Revolutionary War veterans who received bounty-land warrants, fueled westward expansion into what is today Indiana. Tribal nations, who had not previously ceded or sold the land, resisted American expansion, and the resulting wars eventually led to treaties and land cessions by tribal nations – the last of which was ceded by the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma in 1840.

When Indiana received statehood in 1816, becoming the 19th state to join the Union, its constitution reflected the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. "WE [sic]declare, That [sic] all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent, and unalienable rights; among which are the enjoying and defending life and liberty, and of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety." Indiana's constitution put it "on an equal footing with the original States" joining the American legacy.

On July 4, 1976, over 11,000 Hoosiers visited the State House and signed a Reaffirmation of Faith in the Declaration of Independence to celebrate America's bicentennial. This symbolic act demonstrated Hoosiers' dedication to our nation's founding principles of equality and a government by the people for the people. Today, as we approach the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, our identity as Hoosiers and citizens of the state of Indiana reflect a wide array of communities and histories, all connected under the principles laid out in our Constitution – ideals that connect back to the formation of our country in 1776.

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OTHER RESOURCES

- Library of Congress <u>www.loc.gov</u>
- National Archives www.archives.gov/founding-docs/ founding-fathers
- National Park Service www.nps.gov/subjects/ npscelebrates/usa-250.htm
- Smithsonian Institution www.si.edu/250
- · United States Congress www.congress.gov/foundingdocuments
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The U.S. 250th and Indiana's Past, Present, and Future

This planning framework for the U.S. 250th anniversary encompasses three themes embracing Indiana's past, present, and future. The "Past" theme focuses on exploring and commemorating Indiana's history – the ways in which the interaction of the founding principles of the United States with the principles of cultures in the area prior to statehood shaped the development of the Hoosier state and the different ways in which Hoosiers

have understood and implemented these principles. The "Present" theme invites participants to celebrate contemporary Indiana and to reflect on the ways in which the country's founding principles remain relevant. The "Future" theme encourages Hoosiers to consider Indiana's prospects – what should we preserve, what should we change, and how might our actions today influence the foundation of that future?



Communities and Audiences

Many people ask, "what is a Hoosier?" While there is no definitive answer to the origin of the word, people take pride in the nickname and the place it represents. The makeup of Indiana's communities has evolved over time, molded by the contributions of a wide range of ethnic groups. Today, people with many different backgrounds identify themselves as Hoosiers. The comings and goings of people in this state have created the Indiana of today and will continue to shape its future.

Cultural organizations are ideally situated to serve their fellow Hoosiers. They can build connections and inspire through history, the arts, and humanities, and through shared experiences and stories. They can make space for our audiences to explore and reflect on our varied cultural heritage across time: past, present, and future.



Consider the people who make up our local communities. Who was here prior to statehood? How did people get here? Who is here today? What does tomorrow look like? In reflecting on these ideas, organizations can ensure that the people who make up their communities - past and present - have a voice. To foster connections, it's important to look beyond our walls to cultivate relationships, form mutual collaborations, and provide resources that are of value and benefit to the people served. By considering audiences – fellow Hoosiers, neighbors, cities, counties, and the state – in planning for the U.S. 250th and beyond, organizations can provide solid foundations for thriving communities.

The Planning Framework

This planning framework has been created to be a flexible and thoughtful resource for organizations and communities across Indiana as they plan programs and initiatives for the U.S. 250th anniversary. It's designed to help local partners think about what's possible and to develop programming that is relevant and resonates with their audiences. It provides ideas for the creation of opportunities, programs, and ways of engaging with audiences for the U.S. 250th and beyond. This framework is not a fixed script; it encourages exploration and adaptation. It supports organizations focusing on the past, present, and future by helping them navigate the many possibilities that the 250th anniversary presents and offering resources to make their work more intentional.

A key idea of the framework is that the past, present, and future belong to all Hoosiers. By making programming accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds, we can ensure that Hoosiers feel invited to participate in the story of our state. This framework is designed to cultivate a feeling of shared belonging by helping people to see themselves

reflected in Indiana's story. This is not being attempted through a singular or adversarial lens, but through one that encourages multiple perspectives to be valued and shared. We aim to help organizations think about these questions when approaching their audiences: Why does history matter to you? Who is a Hoosier? What does being a Hoosier mean? These questions help to make programming more personal by encouraging reflection on identity, community, and belonging. By connecting the past, present, and future, this framework shows us that we are all part of history, right now. This is an opportunity to think about where we've been, where we are, and where we want to be. Ultimately, this work supports the goal of making our communities stronger, more connected, and more reflective of the many different stories that make up Indiana.

How to use this Interpretive Framework

This planning framework is intended to be used by organizations and communities to plan programming and explore ideas around the U.S. 250th and Indiana's past, present, and future. In each section, you'll find opportunities for creating meaningful outcomes in your community and how to overcome potential roadblocks. The programs detailed in each section are intended to be adaptable and scalable, and are not an exhaustive list, but rather a starting point to activate local planning. Many of the program ideas might be adapted for your organization's programming beyond the United States Semiquincentennial.

By connecting the past, present, and future, this framework shows us that we are all part of history, right now.



Overview

History is the study of the past. Using well-documented sources, historians seek to recount what happened, describe how things were, explain why events unfolded as they did, and show how the past has shaped the present – knowledge that can help us anticipate the effects of present actions on the future. Presenting programs about Indiana's history can educate participants and spark their curiosity. When preparing a history program, it is important to acknowledge that we, as historians, are stewards of our communities' histories, and the way in which we present these stories can have a significant impact on how the public understands them. A community's history is a shared resource and does not belong to any one individual or group. Therefore, history programs provide opportunities to bring people together through constructive dialogues.

As we are exploring and commemorating Indiana's past in the context of the U.S. 250th anniversary, we have an opportunity to reflect on what has happened in the last 250 years and how we will tell those stories. History is more than just the record; it is a tool for understanding, connection, and unity. In a time when public discourse can often feel divided, history programming can help to highlight shared experiences and encourage dialogue across those experiences. Meeting audiences where they are allows for relevant and productive engagement to help bridge those gaps. Designing programs that invite reflection, embrace perspectives, and create space for honest conversation about the past is a way in which we can use history to strengthen local communities and inspire action in the present.

Opportunities

- Continuity Communities can learn how the events and decisions of the past shape the present and future of their communities.
- Perspectives Communities can come to understand that Indiana's history is made up of many voices, cultures, and viewpoints.
- Stewardship Communities can recognize that they are active participants in history who have the power to preserve and interpret, as well as create it.
- Unity This theme has the potential to strengthen community cohesiveness by engaging in shared storytelling.
- Inclusivity This theme allows organizations to create locally relevant programming that reflects multiple histories.
- Reconciliation This theme promotes dialogue that can use history as a tool for connection as opposed to division.
- Heritage Communities can take away a deeper sense of belonging and connection to Indiana's history.
- · Accessibility Organizations can develop a commitment to creating more content for wider audiences.

History is more than just the record; it is a tool for understanding, connection, and unity.





PROGRAM IDEAS

The programs in this section focus on highlighting and interpreting Indiana's past. These ideas are provided as a starting point for thinking about activities for your community's U.S. 250th programming and can be modified to meet the needs of your community. Consider how programs might also be adapted to address the present and future, scaled up or down, and expanded to include multiple generations and audiences.

Community and Culture

COLLABORATIVE PHOTO/ MEMORY PROJECT

Ask community members for family photos and create a digital or in-person display that illustrates the strength of family within your community. Tip: Ensure families have copies of the photos they are providing.

Great for: All ages; families

Potential Partnerships: Libraries; schools, colleges, and universities; community centers; faith-based organizations; clubs and service organizations; veterans' groups

FAMILY TREE ACTIVITY

Have children complete family tree activities so they can explore their family's history within the community. Tip: Provide space for students with non-traditional family structures to participate in this activity as well.

Great for: All ages; families

Potential Partnerships: Schools and teachers; libraries; genealogical organizations; youth organizations

STORIES AND MAPS OF IMMIGRATION

Tell stories of family heritage by collecting histories from families about their journeys to Indiana. Additionally, develop illustrations alongside that history that help to show the variety of different origins of Hoosier families. Tip: Consider that some families may have been in Indiana for 150 years, whereas others may have only been here for 5 years.

Great for: Families, especially elders

Potential Partnerships: Cultural organizations; faith-based organizations; genealogical organizations; immigrant and refugee organizations; artists; service organizations

LANGUAGE TRADITIONS

Explore different dialects and languages within your community through language workshops or dialogue exercises. Tip: Consult with native speakers of the languages being explored so they are explored accurately and in a culturally conscious manner. Additionally, consider Englishderived languages such as Gullah or Jamaican Patois.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Cultural organizations; schools, colleges, and universities; community centers; Native American tribal organizations

Placemaking

THE EVOLUTION OF THE LOCAL **LANDSCAPE**

Invite local engineers, historians, and other experts on your community's infrastructure to give talks about how the local landscape has evolved over time. Tip: Be sure to facilitate a Q&A to maximize educational benefits.

Great for: Teens; adults

Potential Partnerships: Colleges and universities; engineering firms; urban planners; local historians; agricultural organizations; clubs and service organizations

CHRONICLING LOST STRUCTURES

Create temporary signs to install at the sites of buildings in your community that have been torn down. Include historic photos and a brief history of the place. Tip: Use reclaimed building materials such as windows, doors, mailboxes, or other resources to create the signs; create a virtual tour app for people to explore.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Local businesses; local government; preservation organizations; artists; libraries; architects and engineers; clubs and service organizations; agricultural organizations

Food Stories

NOSTALGIA FOOD TASTINGS

Put together meals from different decades and invite your community to taste them. Tip: Ask your community members what they liked to eat as kids, and to share their vintage recipes.

Great for: All ages; families

Potential Partnerships: Local restaurants and chefs; community centers; civic organizations; cultural

organizations; extension clubs

TRADITIONAL BAKING, CANNING, AND PRESENTATION CLASSES

Teach community members time-honored baking, canning, and food presentation techniques. Participants will learn how to prepare traditional recipes, safely preserve seasonal produce, and plate their creations using cultural traditions. <u>Tip:</u> Organize classes around themes like "Holiday Bakes," "Summer Preserves," or "Family Feast Plates."

Great for: All ages; families

Potential Partnerships: Community elders; restaurants, bakeries, and chefs; faith-based organizations; civic organizations; extension clubs; agricultural organizations; local farms and greenhouses

Objects and Things

OBJECT PETTING ZOO

Feature vintage and historic objects that attendees can see and touch. Consider including musical instruments. Tip: This could be most successful by featuring functional items such as a vintage lawnmower that attendants could try out and use to make connections with the past.

Great for: All ages; children

Potential Partnerships: Antique organizations; local businesses; activity boards; extension clubs; musical

organizations

HISTORIC GAMES

Invite community members to play vintage or nostalgic games. Tip: Ask community members if there are any games they remember playing as kids.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Community centers and clubs; youth organizations; faith-based organizations; libraries

Business and Industry

ROOTS OF THE INDUSTRY

Design a pop-up exhibit with an organization that details the history of their industry (automotive, medicine, agriculture, etc.) within your region and how the trade has evolved. Tip: Feature vintage artifacts of the trade in the exhibit.

Great for: All ages; teens

Potential Partnerships: Local businesses; clubs and service organizations; agricultural organizations

The Arts

CLASSES IN TRADITIONAL ARTS AND CRAFTS

Invite community members to learn traditional arts and crafts. Tip: Incorporate lesser-known arts and crafts techniques as well as classic favorites.

Great for: All ages; children; teens

Potential Partnerships: Youth organizations; cultural organizations; arts and activities organizations; after school clubs; Native American tribal organizations

LOCAL MOVIE/VIDEO SCREENINGS

Dive into the film history of your area by examining movies filmed nearby or that are meant to take place in your community. Tip: Consider hosting these screenings at local historic theaters to draw it even closer to home.

Great for: All ages

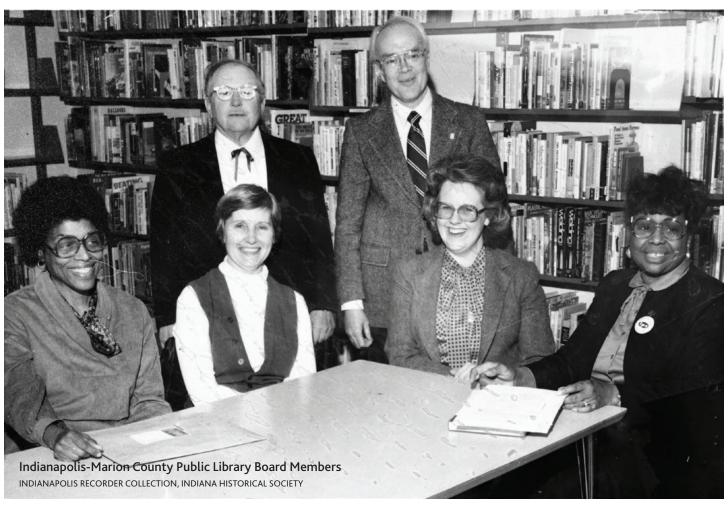
Potential Partnerships: Filmmakers; movie theaters; film historians; arts organizations; community theater groups

HISTORY PLAYS

Write and produce a play meant to depict a piece of your local history. Additionally, look at doing dramatic readings of historical events. Tip: Work with a local historian to facilitate a Q&A after the play to maximize the educational benefit.

Great for: Teens; adults

Potential Partnerships: Local historians; community theater groups; theaters; high school theater classes







Adapting Tried and True Favorites

Exhibits, lectures, and tours are favorites for a reason! They are great ways to engage our audiences with educational and entertaining subject matter and can be adapted for exploring themes around the U.S. 250th. Here are a few ideas for topics exploring Indiana's past.

EXHIBITS

- · Collaborate with the various communities in your region to develop an exhibit that tells the full story of your area.
- · Create an exhibit using objects, documents, and photographs that relate to the topics of freedom, civics, and/or government in your community's history.

LECTURES

- · Invite speakers from different generations to each share what teen life was like in their era – clothing, food, music, entertainment, sports. Include teen photos from each speaker and ask the audience to share their teen photos on social media.
- Invite artists and craft specialists to discuss the history of techniques and materials such as paint, wood, paper, and more.

TOURS

- Present a tour of local ghost signs (faded signs painted on the sides of buildings) and historical advertisements and business signs.
- Offer a self-guided driving/walking tour with a digital app and photos of lost architecture and community spaces in your town, city, or county. For a special event, offer holographic or projected images after dark at certain places on the tour.

Overcoming Potential Roadblocks

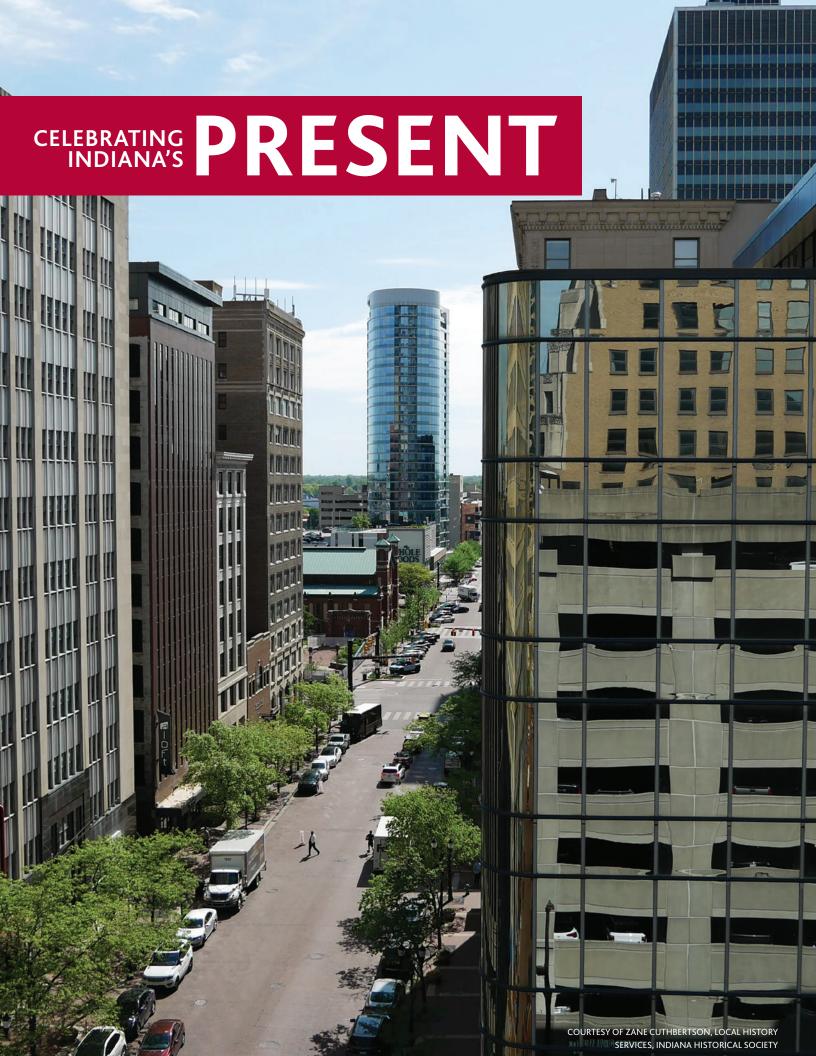
There is often fear of discomfort when addressing complex historical subjects. This can be overcome by approaching history with honesty and context, providing credible sources, and facilitating conversations that encourage all sorts of community members to participate.

Some organizations may encounter challenges with low community engagement or audience interest. This can be addressed by asking community members directly what stories they want to hear, using

interactive formats like exhibits and performances to draw in engagement, and promoting programs through accessible local networks such as social media groups or news outlets.

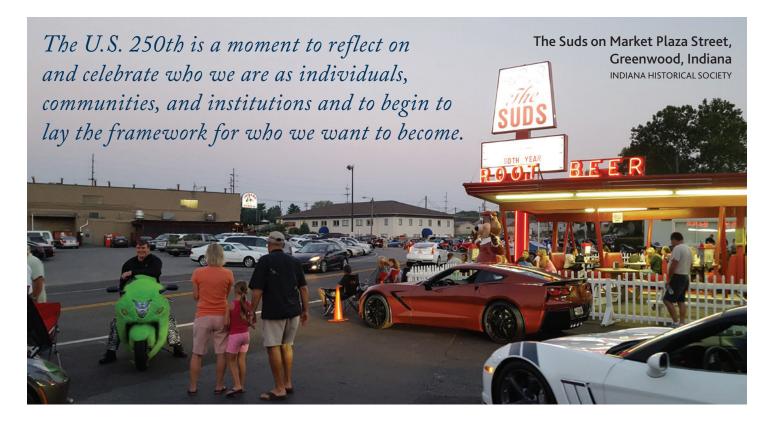
Gaps in historical knowledge and local records can be overcome by valuing personal history and lived experience as legitimate sources.

New stories are always being discovered and can be added to shared information. This can be addressed by collaborating with cultural and community organizations in both planning and storytelling, using the U.S. 250th anniversary as an opportunity to consider overlooked histories, and allowing narratives to expand as new perspectives are included.



Overview

Cultural organizations of all types "do history," whether that is interpreting a particular event, person, or time period; examining the impact of innovation in the arts; or exploring cultural and population changes over time. It's important to remember those histories led us to where we are today as communities with our own characteristics and identities. The U.S. 250th is a moment to reflect on and celebrate who we are as individuals, communities, and institutions, and to begin to lay the framework for who we want to become.



Opportunities

- Communication The U.S. 250th gives us the opportunity to bring together varying communities and generations for thoughtful discussions about our common human experiences. We can facilitate conversations that will build understanding about our similarities as well as our differences.
- Becoming and Belonging Communities can begin to think about Indiana's past and present by thinking about the idea of being a "Hoosier." Beyond the elusive definition of the word, what does it mean to be Hoosier? Who is a Hoosier and when do they become one? This is a chance for communities to reflect on and celebrate what has given them their unique identities and characters, and how they are part of Indiana's story. Consider using your Semiquincentennial events and programs as an opportunity to reach out to different groups in your community. For example, the state of Indiana includes
- the ancestral lands of numerous indigenous peoples whose descendants are still here, thriving, and have stories to tell. They and many other vibrant communities continue to play important roles in the Hoosier state.
- Planning for the Future Libraries, archives, and museums care for the collective memory of our communities. We can acknowledge that history happens every day, actively collect current objects and stories, and hold ourselves accountable for the way we interpret our community history. The U.S. 250th is an opportunity to improve our ability to steward the objects and stories that have been entrusted to us.
- Our Work In the next year, we will have incredible opportunities to talk to our communities about the work we do and why it's important. Consider how we can communicate the way we do our work as well as showing the importance and impact of what we do.

PROGRAM IDEAS

These program ideas are intended to highlight present-day Indiana. They are provided as a starting point for thinking about activities for your community's U.S. 250th programming and can be modified to meet the needs of your community. Consider how programs might also be adapted to address the past and future, scaled up or down, and expanded to include multiple generations and audiences.

Community and Culture

ADULTS READ THINGS THEY WROTE AS **KIDS**

Ask adults to bring in, read, and discuss things they wrote as kids. Tip: Host a workshop on journaling and include diaries for children.

Great for: All ages; families

Potential Partnerships: Libraries; schools; youth organizations; writers; clubs and service organizations

CULTURAL WORKSHOPS

Sponsor and host workshops about the art, music, and food of local communities. Tip: Provide opportunities to talk about how the local community can support the work and culture of differing populations.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Cultural organizations; arts and activities organizations; after-school clubs; clubs and service organizations

MULTILINGUAL STORYTELLING

Gather people together to share their stories in their own languages and lead discussions about their cultures. Encourage people to create new stories. Tip: Consider providing written translations and recording the stories.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Cultural organizations; arts and activities organizations; Native American tribal organizations; immigrant & refugee organizations; schools, colleges, and universities



"Jdee and Jo-Jo Walk to Granna's" INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Placemaking

BLOCK PARTY

Bring people together for a party celebrating neighborhoods and areas in your communities. Ask local musicians to provide entertainment. Tip: Consider how to encourage people to explore new places. For example, host a block party at a farm or a farmers' market.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Neighborhood associations; schools; cultural organizations; local businesses; local farmers; clubs and service organizations; musicians

LOCAL CLIMATE SCIENCE

Host learning and discussion opportunities about the local climate and how it affects our lives. Tip: Consider adding information about native flora, fauna, and ecosystems.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Local farmers; scientists; agricultural clubs; extension clubs; local greenhouses; schools, colleges, and universities

ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Host meetings and planning sessions to talk about unused and underused structures. Tip: Invite people who have successfully completed adaptive reuse projects for tips and tricks.

Great for: Adults

Potential Partnerships: Local business owners; preservation groups; realtors; local historians; architects; engineers; entrepreneurs; government officials; faith-based organizations

Food Stories

TRADITIONAL RECIPES WITH A MODERN TWIST

Hold cooking classes teaching modern twists on older recipes. Don't forget those amazing mid-20th century creations! Tip: Consider how to include food safety and healthy substitution suggestions.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Local restaurants and chefs; farmers; agricultural clubs; extension clubs; schools; clubs and service organizations; faith-based organizations

FOOD FORAGING TODAY

Plan learning opportunities about foraging and foodways, both traditional and modern. Consider urban, suburban, and rural foraging practices and food safety. Tip: Take a foraging tour and cook a shared meal using the foraged ingredients.

Great for: Teens; adults

Potential Partnerships: Local restaurants and chefs; food scientists; gardening clubs; farmers; agricultural clubs; extension clubs

Business and Industry

INSIDE LOCAL BUSINESS

Work with local businesses to provide demonstrations and talk about local innovation and training. Tip: Consider hosting a local business fair or offer space for a communitycurated exhibit by local businesses.

Great for: All ages; families

Potential Partnerships: Local businesses and industries; schools; trade schools; farmers; economic development groups; service industries

Objects and Things

CREATING DIGITAL CONTENT

Develop workshops about taking and preserving digital photos, as well as saving digital communications, social media posts, and other born digital content. Tip: Host digital photography sharing programs for hands-on as well as tips-and-tricks learning.

Great for: Teens; adults; families

Potential Partnerships: Libraries; genealogy groups; cultural organizations; schools; clubs and service organizations; artists; faith-based organizations

HOW THINGS ARE MADE

Bring in experts to share information about how things are made. Focus on local industry, technology, and innovation. Tip: Consider creating "make and take" programs and maker spaces.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Local businesses and industries; trade schools; farmers; schools, colleges, and universities

The Arts

ART SWAP

Host art-making sessions to encourage artists to share their work and techniques. Tip: Think about art "speed dating" or "round robins" with one artist beginning a work and passing it along to other artists to continue.

Great for: Adults; teens

Potential Partnerships: Arts and activities organizations; artists; cultural organizations and clubs; extension clubs; after-school clubs

FILMMAKING WORKSHOPS

Showcase filmmaking techniques, special effects, stopmotion and Claymation; make a film of the community today and what makes it special. Tip: Collaborate with creatives to teach modeling, special effects, and art techniques.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Filmmakers; movie theaters; arts organizations; artists; schools, colleges, and universities



ARCHITECTURE MODELING

Lead a group on a local architecture tour. Then, use cardboard and tape to create models of local buildings. <u>Tip:</u> Put the models together to recreate a current streetscape.

Great for: Children; teens

Potential Partnerships: Youth organizations; architects; local historians; libraries; preservation groups; local businesses; artists; schools, colleges, and universities

PLEIN AIR PAINTING

Host open-air painting opportunities focusing on different areas in your community – downtowns, rural areas, parks, and historic structures and landscapes. Tip: Pair the painting opportunities with art classes for all ages and consider working with local musical groups to perform.

Great for: All ages; adults

Potential Partnerships: Artists; gardening groups; cultural organizations; arts organizations; farmers; clubs and service organizations; musicians

Adapting Tried and True Favorites

Exhibits, lectures, and tours are favorites for a reason! They are great ways to engage our audiences with educational and entertaining subject matter, and can be adapted for exploring themes around the U.S. 250th. Here are a few ideas for topics exploring present-day Indiana.

EXHIBITS

- Create a collaborative pop-up museum and invite the public to contribute a work of art, story, or photo that illustrates their favorite thing about the community today.
- Develop a display of life today if an exhibit about life in 2026 was created in 50 years, what objects would it contain?

LECTURES

- Invite speakers in two different disciplines (for example: physics and marching bands, or jewelry making and astronomy) to each give a short presentation on their subject matter and then discuss ways in which they intersect.
- · Host a lecture series on the topic of social media and its impact on art, history, education, and science.

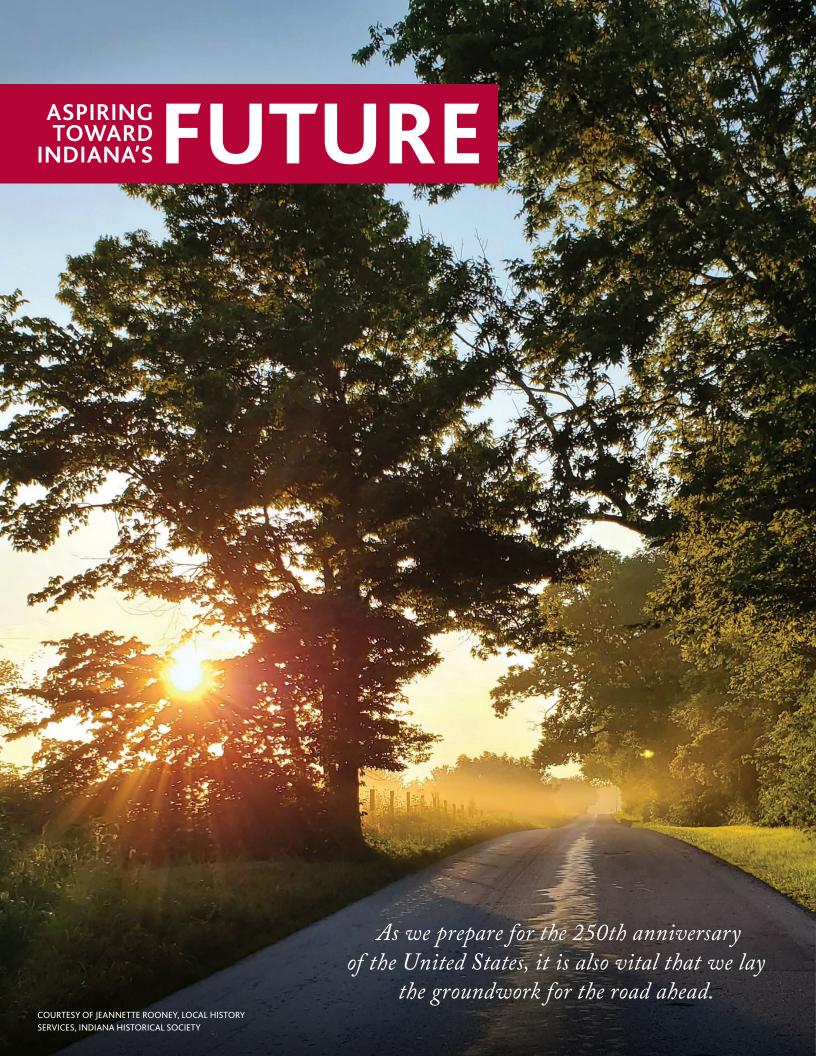
TOURS

- Offer a driving/boating/hiking tour of local waterways and discuss issues of land management and ecological impacts.
- Arrange a behind-the-scenes tour of a local power station, city works department, street department, and/or water treatment plant, guided by civil engineers.

Overcoming Potential Roadblocks

It isn't easy to connect regional and local history to an event that happened in 1776 when the Northwest Territory wasn't established until 1787, and Indiana didn't become a state until 1816. What happens if you move beyond commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence?

Think about the principles found in the Declaration and how they continue to influence your community today. Where do you see evidence of these principles? What do they mean for groups of people in your community? How can you involve your community in thinking about their impact?



Overview

In 1776, people couldn't have imagined the world as it is today. But they hoped, dreamed, and planned for what the future might hold, just as we do now. As we prepare for the 250th anniversary of the United States, it is also vital that we lay the groundwork for the road ahead. While reflecting on our history and celebrating in the present, we should remember that our decisions today can have far-reaching impact in our communities, and if we are intentional in our planning, we have the potential to create a future by choice, rather than by chance.



Opportunities

- Vision The U.S. 250th offers the opportunity to bring our communities together around a shared vision for the future. We can reflect on where we are now and where we would like to be – and then determine the pathways that will take us there.
- **Hope** By focusing on creating a shared vision for our communities, we can foster hope for the future and cultivate a sense of purpose we can carry into the coming weeks and years as we work towards our goals.
- **Legacy** As we lay the foundations for the future, we can determine what legacy we want to leave for future generations. Consider what we can do today that will have a lasting positive impact.
- Sustainability Each generation builds upon the achievements, failures, and lessons of the people who came before. Consider how we can set the next generations up for success in our organizations and our communities.

PROGRAM IDEAS

The program ideas in this section look towards Indiana's future. These ideas are provided as a starting point for thinking about activities for your community's U.S. 250th programming and can be modified to meet the needs of your community. Consider how programs might also be adapted to address the past and present, scaled up or down, and expanded to include multiple generations and audiences.

Community and Culture

DESIGN YOUR COMMUNITY'S PAVILION FOR A FUTURE WORLD'S FAIR

Imagine there will be a World's Fair 50 years from now, and your county will have a pavilion to display your advancements and culture. What would it contain? Invite your community to design booths, artwork, and displays, and then host a World's Fair event to showcase the ideas. Tip: Offer presentations and materials on the history of World's Fairs to provide inspiration; encourage the inclusion of science, technology, and other topics.

Great for: Teens; adults

Potential Partnerships: Schools, colleges, and universities; local businesses; libraries

STUDENTS ENVISION THE PATH FORWARD

Partner with a high school and design a course unit within a government or civics class that educates students on contemporary issues and solutions that allows them to design a vision for the future. Tip: Allow teachers to take the lead in unit design.

Great for: High school students

Potential Partnerships: Social studies teachers; civic organizations; schools, colleges, and universities

MAYOR FOR A DAY

Invite elementary and/or middle school children to imagine what they would do if they were mayor for a day. What would they do for their community? Tip: Work with the current mayor's office and, if possible, enact some of the changes that the children propose. Free ice cream for everyone?

Great for: Elementary and middle school students

Potential Partnerships: Schools and teachers; families; local government; civic organizations; clubs and service organizations

MESSAGES TO THE FUTURE

Invite community members to write letters or create videos with messages describing their hopes and dreams for the future. Host an event or exhibit featuring the messages. **Tip**: Create an archive of these messages to preserve them.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Creative writing instructors; schools and teachers; libraries; faith-based organizations; veterans' groups

COMMUNITY TIME CAPSULE

Ask people in your community to write letters to their children or family members and seal the letters in a time capsule along with contemporary memorabilia (and maybe other messages to the future), to be opened in 25 or 50 years. <u>Tip:</u> Provide archival paper, pencils, and paper for the letters.

Great for: Families; all ages

Potential Partnerships: Local government and businesses; funeral homes (to seal and bury the time capsule); clubs and service organizations

Placemaking

COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION

Initiate street cleanups; install outdoor benches, updated lighting, and public art; renew natural landscapes; plant native trees and flowers; turn vacant lots into community gardens; revitalize historic structures. Tip: Create a plan and set aside funds for future maintenance.

Great for: Teens; adults

Potential Partnerships: Local government and city planners; local businesses; community clubs; faith-based organizations; Native American tribal organizations



PUBLIC SPACE PROTOTYPING

Also known as tactical urbanism, this technique uses flexible, temporary projects to move towards long-term solutions in public spaces. For example, block off a street for a week to allow for food trucks and outdoor restaurant seating; create a pop-up park in a parking lot; or develop temporary bike lanes through your downtown. Tips: Survey the community beforehand to see where the greatest needs are for these projects; use low-cost materials to try out different options. If a project is successful, work toward implementing it long-term.

Great for: Teens; adults

Potential Partnerships: Local government and city planners; local businesses and restaurants; community clubs; libraries

Food Stories

THE FOOD OF TOMORROW

Host an event that explores the future of food and farming: innovations in regenerative agriculture and land use, urban gardening, hydroponics, diversifying food sources, and more. <u>Tip:</u> Showcase food vendors and hands-on activities that demonstrate changes that people can make on an individual and community level.

Great for: Families; all ages

Potential Partnerships: Farmers; university agriculture and science departments; scientists; teachers and schools; cultural organizations; restaurants; Native American tribal organizations; extension clubs

Business & Industry

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL BUSINESS

Host discussions with local business leaders about the future of their businesses and industries, and how this might improve or impact the local community. <u>Tip:</u> Consider both small and large businesses, companies, stores, and restaurants.

Great for: Teens; Adults

Potential Partnerships: Local businesses; local government; entrepreneurs; clubs and service organizations

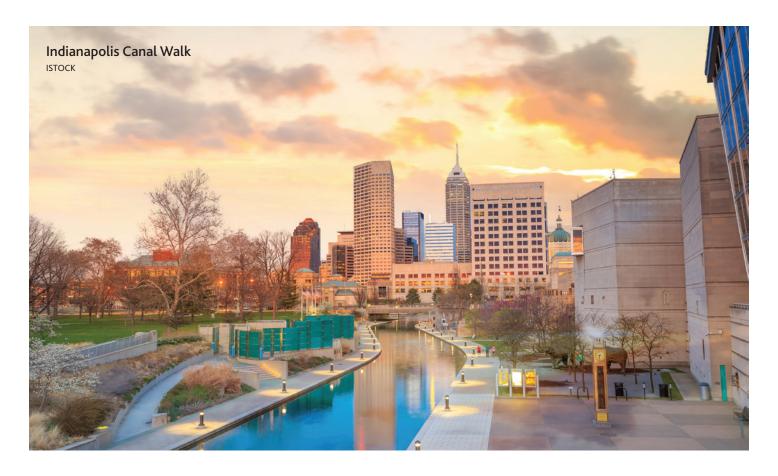
Objects and Things

PRESERVING LOCAL TREASURES

Offer a workshop focused on preserving family treasures and local artifacts for the future. Include contemporary items such as digital photos and videos, emails, books, and products such as plastics and toys. Tip: Provide a storage box and packet of resources for attendees.

Great for: Teens; adults

Potential Partnerships: Archivists and conservators; libraries; schools, colleges, and universities: science departments; genealogical groups



The Arts

COLLABORATIVE PUBLIC ART PROJECT

Bring together multiple people and groups from the community to create a mural or public art project that envisions the future. Consider natural living art projects, such as quilt gardens and moss/greenery walls. <u>Tip:</u> Invite people in the community to submit their visions for public art and then display the vision boards in downtown storefronts; ask the community to vote on their favorites.

Great for: All ages

Potential Partnerships: Artists; art classes and clubs; local businesses; horticulturists; plant stores; local government

POETRY/SONG WRITING CONTEST

Invite people to write a song or poem based on a theme that imagines the future of the community, such as hope, progress, or rejuvenation. Host workshops where people can learn about writing and find inspiration. Tip: Invite contest finalists to present their work at a festival or event.

Great for: Teens; adults

Potential Partnerships: Poets, musicians, authors; schools, colleges, and universities

VIRTUAL REALITY AND AI WORKSHOP

Host an event that explores the future of virtual reality and AI, and how it might affect the world of art, culture, and history. Tip: Show examples of current technology and how it works, as well as potential pros and cons for implementing its use in cultural applications.

Great for: Teens; adults

Potential Partnerships: Schools, colleges and universities; tech companies; cultural organizations that have implemented VR or AI tech; artists; musicians

Adapting Tried and True Favorites

Exhibits, lectures, and tours are favorites for a reason! They are great ways to engage our audiences with educational and entertaining subject matter, and can be adapted for exploring themes around the U.S. 250th. Here are a few ideas for topics exploring Indiana's future.

EXHIBITS

- · Create an exhibit that explores how people in the past envisioned the future – and how we envision the future today; display tech items in your collection and show how they have evolved.
- Display student artist works that explore topics related to the future.

LECTURES

- · Invite Native American tribal organizations to discuss the future of their communities and land use.
- Host a discussion by scientists and utility/technology companies on the future of climate and energy production.
- Offer a lecture series on the future of communication, with topics presented by linguists, literature professors, IT specialists, and librarians.

TOURS

- Invite the community to tour local farms that are implementing sustainable practices.
- · Host a guided tour of local buildings, exploring past building practices and innovations, recent buildings, and new construction techniques.

Overcoming Potential Roadblocks

We are living in stressful times. When everything feels divisive and contentious, how do we make space to talk about the future? Community conversations start with including a variety of organizations and individuals. Invite multiple voices to the discussion, listen, and collaborate to create a shared vision for the future. Bring people together around shared experiences that build community.

It feels difficult to focus on laying groundwork for the future when we have so much to deal with right now. First, make it fun! Involve your community and let everyone dream big – leave nothing off the table. Be sure to gather lots of ideas and set aside time to come together and specifically focus on honing the vision and planning for the future. Then, create a plan to begin implementing the steps to take you there.

What if we have big dreams for the future but we don't have the resources to make them happen? Try focusing on one achievable project at a time. Once your community starts to see progress, it can often build momentum, excitement, and support to work towards achieving bigger projects.

CREATING LEGACY PROJECTS



Legacy projects are projects that are intended to commemorate an event, a group, an individual, etc., so the work that was created will last beyond the date on which it was completed. Legacy projects are a way communities can come together to leave a mark that can last generations. They fit within the context of the U.S. 250th, as it is a momentous occasion in which many programs and events will occur. As such, there is plenty of room to create something that will help to ensure the work which occurred is not forgotten about at the conclusion of the project. Legacy projects can also help to inform the future as they can inspire future projects and help those in the future make sense of the past and present.

The following tips provide ideas that can be adapted by organizations large and small to determine how they want to leave a legacy. Legacy projects provide a way to celebrate or commemorate the past while also helping to build a stronger and more connected community in the future.

Tips for Legacy Projects

- Community Input Invite the community to be involved in the planning and execution of legacy projects. This will help to determine what the community would like its legacy to be and to build trust through planning that is inclusive of everyone in your community.
- Clear Purpose Ensure that your legacy project has a real purpose by asking yourself what its impact 5, 20, or 50 years from now should be. How will this project be representative of your community?
- Accessibility and Inclusivity Be sure that your project is accessible in terms of its location, the language used, or technology. Also consider partnering with organizations that can help to reach multiple groups.
- Partnerships Consider collaborating with schools, libraries, businesses, etc., to cultivate an idea of shared ownership of the project. This will help bring in new ideas and resources so your project can be successful.
- Documentation Take photos of the process and collect stories and reflections throughout. The execution of the project is part of its legacy, and the memories of the process will add to the legacy.
- **Sustainability** You want a project that will stand the test of time. Consider using durable materials, think about maintenance, consult with professionals, or consider digital legacy projects.
- Celebrate and Share Involve the public heavily in the launch and creation of your project. Honor those involved. Share your project on social media or local news stations. This is something you want the public to look at with pride. It is a shared legacy.

Project Ideas

Oral History Projects – Collect testimony from individuals of all ages and backgrounds within your community to ensure that varying perspectives on the history of your community are gathered.

Scholarship Funds – Create a local scholarship designated for the study of the humanities or sciences – arts, history, culture, preservation, etc.

Land Conservation – Work with local groups to set aside land for environmental conservation projects and historic landscape preservation.

Public Art Pieces – Commission artists to design murals, sculptures, statues, etc. that help to illustrate components of Indiana's history or the U.S. 250th overall.

Curriculum Pieces – Design lessons or curricula that educators can easily incorporate in their history or civics units to help get students involved.

Digital Archives and Exhibits – Digitize pieces of your local history such as photos, documents, oral histories, etc. so that they can live on safely for future generations.

Community Time Capsules – Consult experts to assist in burying a time capsule so the contents can paint a picture of the spirit of 2026 when it is opened by a future generation.

Dialogue Programs – Think about story circles or other sorts of dialogue programs can promote intergenerational dialogue so that the stories of elders can be passed on through the youth.







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For more information, contact the IHS Local History Services department at localhistoryservices@indianahistory.org or (317) 232-1882.

For more resources and a toolkit of planning templates, visit www.indianahistory.org/LHSresources or scan the QR code below.

