

Vermont Historical Society Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029

Mission

Vermont Historical Society believes understanding the past changes lives and builds better communities. Our purpose is to engage Vermonters and Vermonters-at-Heart with outstanding collections, state-wide outreach, and dynamic programming.

Vision

Every person and every moment create the story of Vermont. Through sharing these collective stories, Vermonters will increase their knowledge of our state's complex past, inform our present, and understand how our unique experiences impact and shape this ongoing narrative.

Executive Summary

[insert once plan approved]

Process

In 2018 Vermont Historical Society undertook a rigorous planning process with stakeholders across all categories of participation with society activities and program. In-person interviews, surveys, and focused workshops challenged participants to envision Vermont Historical Society ten years in the future. This work resulted in the successful 2019 to 2024 plan. Understanding the original work posed a ten-year timeline, our 2023/2024 effort sought to interrogate, refine, and rewrite lessons and goals from 2018. Staff, through a series of workshops, identified ongoing strategies, completed strategies, and those that could be abandoned. Using this information, a board and staff committee refined and rewrote overarching draft goals reflecting contemporary realities. These goals, along with an updated mission statement, and new vision statement, were tested through an interview process that mirrored that of 2018. Interview data was combined with staff and board feedback to produce the 2024-2029 summarized plan.

Goals

- 1. Provide Vermonters and Vermonters-at-heart the resources to access Vermont's rich historical collections from anywhere in the world.***
- 2. Recognize and support local history efforts; understanding that local societies are an integral part of sharing and preserving Vermont's story.***
- 3. Build resilient and connected communities, so Vermonters will understand Vermont's history and its place in the broader world.***

4. Enrich guests' experience through deeper understanding of Vermont and its people.

Goals with Strategies

1. Provide Vermonters and Vermonters-at-heart the resources to access Vermont's rich historical collections from anywhere in the world.

1.1. Statewide Digital Platform

We will establish a statewide digital platform to bring together Vermont's history from across the entire state. The platform will provide access to our own collections and those of large and small historical institutions across Vermont. In addition, we will identify digitization priorities within our own holdings and expand the quantity and quality of digital access to the collections of the Vermont Historical Society.

1.2. Research & Exhibition Gallery

We will substantially increase access to museum collections through a research and exhibition gallery. The gallery will engage researchers, educators, and students in the pursuit of material culture study. It will inspire public visitation and use of our broader collection.

1.3. Collections Inventory

We will complete an inventory of the objects in the museum collections of the Vermont Historical Society. Each item will be located or marked missing, receive a basic condition report and basic cataloging, and rehouse as necessary. In this work, we will identify general weakness areas to orient future strategic collecting work.

1.4. Library/Archives Cataloging

We will address the backlog of library cataloging through vigorous examination and analysis of the work to be done. We will designate certain areas for completion and reprocess or more fully catalog other areas identified as high priorities. As necessary, we will reprocess collections and ensure that all local catalog records are reflected in OCLC (formerly Online Computer Library Center).

2. Recognize and support local history efforts; understanding that local societies are an integral part of sharing and preserving Vermont's story.

2.1. Workshops/Roundtables

We will provide training and support for Local Historical Societies and museums so that they can be active and sustainable organizations. Programs will encourage local historical societies to build community engagement and maintain best practices.

2.2. Grant Program

We will establish a grant program to support local history efforts that reflect a broad and inclusive story of Vermont. Grants will help promote viability and sustainability of active local history organizations.

2.3. Support 250th Programming/Events

We will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of our country through programs, projects, and products that highlight the contributions, struggles, and connections Vermonters made and continue to make in the establishment, growth, and future of our country.

2.4. Local History Gallery

We will continue to collaborate with local historical societies and other community groups to explore the rich cultural heritage of Vermont through curated exhibits. We will expand the focus of the gallery to support untold and underrepresented narratives including thematic tie-ins with the 250th commemoration.

3. Build resilient and connected communities, so Vermonters will understand Vermont's history and its place in the broader world.

3.1. History Day

We will strive to align the goals of Vermont History Day to meet the Vermont educational system's needs, and actively work to make the program equitable for student engagement. We will expand access to the contest and identify pathways for all interested students to participate.

3.2. Provide VT history content/support to teachers and students

We will be the premier state history resource by producing primary resources and lesson plans that align with state standards and proficiency-based learning. Ongoing educator support will occur through professional development, teacher workshops, and History Kits that target content deemed useful through surveys and feedback. We will continue to curate content for the student-facing components of Vermont History Explorer.

3.3. Digital Media

We will tell nuanced, strategic stories that share a window on the past and how they inform life today. We will evaluate our current offerings in terms of audience and objectives. Expansion will consider new audiences, connection to other strategic initiatives, ongoing and existing research, and staff capacity.

3.4. Future of Traditional Publications

We will evaluate new avenues and media to tell Vermont's story to diverse audiences. We will evaluate whether all our current publications should continue as individual products or whether there is an opportunity to efficiently merge publications. In addition, we will partner with mainstream Vermont media as an outlet for our work.

3.5. Redefine Membership for a Modern History Organization

We will redefine what it means to be a member in a modern historical society through a process of research and surveying key stakeholders. We will grow a robust, engaged, and sustainable membership that reflects the mission and financial needs of our organization.

4. Enrich guests' experience through deeper understanding of Vermont and its people.

4.1. Update *Freedom & Unity* Exhibit

We will assess and evaluate the *Freedom and Unity* exhibit to discover ways to enhance the telling of all Vermont stories to drive public engagement. We will revise, redesign, and reinstall target sections of the exhibit within the current landscape of historical scholarship.

4.2. Vermont History Center Identity

We will articulate a shared understanding of the building and how the building facilitates engagement with both staff and the public. We will examine past access and use of the Vermont History Center to make strategic choices about future access to and use of the facility. We envision a history center that facilitates broad inclusive access, supports the mission of the Historical Society, and makes the best use of resources and capacity.