

# Manual of Suggested Practices

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## Section I

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), and the Council of State Archivists (CoSA)

### ***The National Archives and Records Administration***

*Vision.* As the nation's record keeper, it is our vision that all Americans will understand the vital role records play in a democracy, and their own personal stake in the National Archives. Our holdings and diverse programs will be available to more people than ever before through modern technology and dynamic partnerships. The stories of our nation and our people are told in the records and artifacts cared for in NARA facilities around the country. We want all Americans to be inspired to explore the records of their country.

*Mission.* The National Archives and Records Administration serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our Government, ensuring that the people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage. We ensure continuing access to the essential documentation of the rights of American citizens and the actions of their government. We support democracy, promote civic education, and facilitate historical understanding of our national experience.

For more information on NARA visit the [National Archives web site](#).

### ***The National Historical Publications and Records Commission***

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) is the grantmaking affiliate of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). NARA protects *Federal* records of historical value. The NHPRC was created along with the National Archives in 1934, and has had grantmaking authorization since 1964.

- The NHPRC helps non-Federal institutions preserve and make broadly accessible other records of historical value through grants to archival institutions, manuscript repositories, and publications in multiple formats.
- NHPRC grants help locate, preserve, and provide public access to documents, photographs, maps, and other historical materials.
- Our grants go to state and local archives, colleges and universities, libraries and historical societies, and other non-profit organizations.

The Archivist of the United States chairs the Commission and makes grants on its recommendation. The other fourteen [members](#) of the Commission represent the President (two appointees), the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, the Federal Judiciary, the Departments of State and Defense, the Librarian of Congress, and six national professional associations of archivists and historians.

The Commission adopted its current [Strategic Plan](#) in May 2004.

### ***The NHPRC Staff***

With input from the Commission, the Archivist of the United States appoints an Executive Director, who serves as the head of the NHPRC staff and the liaison to the Commission.

The Executive Director reports to the Archivist of the United States. All NHPRC staff are employees of NARA.

NHPRC staff share responsibility for making the program work for you and with you. We encourage you to contact the [contact the staff](#) with your questions and comments.

### ***The Council of State Archivists***

The [Council of State Archivists](#) (CoSA) is a national organization comprising the individuals who serve as the State Historical Records Coordinators. Working collectively through their membership in CoSA, these individuals encourage cooperation among the states and SHRABs on matters of mutual interest, define and communicate archival and records concerns at a national level, and work with the NHPRC, NARA, and other national organizations to ensure that the nation's documentary heritage is preserved and accessible.

A variety of reports, tools, and other resources are available through the CoSA web site, including a directory of State Historical Records Coordinators and links to the web sites of each of the State Historical Records Advisory Boards.

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## Section II

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### **State Historical Records Advisory Boards (SHRABs)**

#### ***Authority***

The State Historical Records Advisory Boards (SHRABs) are authorized under Federal regulations governing the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (36 CFR Chapter 12). The boards also derive their mission from the Commission's Federal statutory authority ([44 U.S.C. Chapter 25](#)).

#### ***Appointment, Membership, and Composition***

*Appointments.* The members of the Board are to be appointed according to a state-adopted process. The appointment process and the Board membership must be reported at least annually to the Commission. A majority of the members should have recognizable experience

in the administration of records, manuscripts, or archives. The Board should be as broadly representative as possible of the public and private archives, records offices, and research institutions and organization in the state (36 CFR 1206.41(b)).

We suggest that state Boards be authorized in state statute, but acknowledge that some will be authorized in state regulation or administrative rules, executive orders, or through other formal action or notice by a state agency or Board. Such state authority recognizes the Federal/State partnership that the Boards are intended to embody, defines additional state functions, and may be necessary for the Board to request and receive funding.

We suggest that the Board consists of at least seven members including the state historical records coordinator who chairs the Board (unless otherwise specified in state statute). Boards vary in size from seven to more than a dozen.

We suggest that if the state has another state-funded historical agency or agencies with archival and/or records responsibilities besides the state archival agency, the official(s) in charge of at least one of these shall be a member of the SHRAB.

States that chose to designate an existing Board or committee as the SHRAB must assure that the Board or committee meets the basic membership and composition requirements cited in section 1206.41(b) above.

We suggest that when the state coordinator provides the Commission with a description of the appointment process and a list of Board members, he or she certifies that they meet basic membership qualifications.

We suggest that members be appointed for three years with the possibility of renewal. We prefer that terms are staggered so that one-third of the Board is newly appointed or reappointed each year. Unless governed by another rule, we suggest that Board members continue until replacements are appointed. We encourage Boards to adopt standards for attendance and declare positions open if those standards are not met.

SHRAB members will not be deemed to be officials or employees of the Federal Government and will receive no Federal compensation for their service on the Board, but may receive compensation for travel expenses incurred during the course of project activities and administration from SHRAB grant funds if the project budget allows.

### ***Mission and Organization***

*Responsibilities.* The Board is the central advisory body for historical records coordination with the state and for NHPRC state and local records projects within the state. The Board engages in planning; it develops, revises, and submits to the Commission a state plan including priorities for state historical records projects. The Board reviews all state and local records projects within the state and makes recommendations for state projects to the Commission (36 CFR 1206.41(a)).

In addition, since the Commission considers applications from State government agencies only in states where there is an active Board (36 CFR 1206.54), you have an obligation as a Board to remain active to assure that state agency applications are considered by the Commission.

We suggest that the Board coordinate historical records planning and Commission-funded projects developed and carried out within the State and facilitate cooperation among historical records repositories and other information agencies within the state.

The Board may move beyond an advisory and coordination role to plan, develop, and implement programs to address priorities for its state's historical records. Non-Federal funding may be sought in support of these programs, and a broad range of advocacy, educational, and grant-making projects may be implemented either independently or in conjunction with NHPRC support.

In addition, the Board may:

1. Promote an understanding of the role and value of historical records;
2. Solicit or develop proposals for NHPRC grant projects;
3. Foster and support cooperative networks and programs dealing with historical records;
4. Review through reports and otherwise monitor the operation and progress of projects in the state financed by NHPRC grants; and
5. Advise the state archives and other statewide archival, records, or information agencies.

We encourage Boards to adopt bylaws further defining their mission and priorities, organization, membership responsibilities, and other policies such as conflict of interest, public meetings and attendance. We encourage Boards to share copies of their bylaws and other policy and procedural documents with other state Boards and with the Commission.

### ***Responsibilities of a SHRAB Member***

We suggest that you:

- Learn as much about the archival and historical records programs and issues in your state as possible. If you are an active professional in the field, let others in the field know that you are on the state Board and are interested in their concerns and ideas about how to improve archival and records programs in the state. If you are not an archival or records professional, chances are you still have an interest and some knowledge about history, government, or research and information issues. A good place to learn more about archival and records programs and issues in your state is your SHRAB's strategic plan. If it hasn't completed one, find out why and ask your state coordinator to suggest some other articles or good sources of information as background.

- Learn about the NHPRC and its partnership in working with the states by reviewing this manual and visiting the NHPRC Web site. There you will find the current grant opportunity announcements, descriptions and links to a wide range of projects the Commission supports, as well as information on the organizations with which the Commission works closely.
- Review reports produced by the Council of State Archivists on the status of state archival and records programs and other non-governmental historical records repositories.
- Attend meetings (normally 1-4 per year) of your SHRAB, but perhaps more if the SHRAB has an active project. Review carefully all grant proposals submitted for Board consideration. Comply with applicable states laws and Board policy concerning conflict of interest.
- Participate in the SHRAB-sponsored activities such as planning and training sessions, information gathering, public education efforts, project development, grant proposal review, and conferences or workshops sponsored by the Board or other organizations with complementary concerns and interests.
- Serve on a committee, provide information to interested organizations and individuals, and assist those interested in applying for grant support to understand the NHPRC's and SHRAB's goals as well as the sometimes arduous process of winning SHRAB and NHPRC support for a worthwhile project.

### ***NHPRC Grant Proposal Review***

The NHPRC grant review process may include many steps from initial inquiry and determination of eligibility to final applicant notification of the Commission's decision.

Commission staff review all proposals for completeness, conformity to application requirements, and overall eligibility, and will make overall recommendations to the Commission based on state Board and peer reviewer evaluation.

Commission members individually review proposals and recommendations of state Boards, peer reviewers and staff and then meet to deliberate and make recommendations to the Archivist of the United States who has statutory grant-making authority.

### ***SHRAB Grant Proposal Review***

State boards review all proposals **except**:

1. Documentary editing or publication subvention projects or programs,
2. Native American projects or programs (These are excluded by Presidential Executive Order.),
3. Projects whose work largely takes place within more than one state, including regional and national collaborative efforts,
4. Proposals submitted by the state board or on behalf of the state board.

Boards and coordinators may comment on these excepted proposals when project directors seek Board advice, but such advice is not a formal review submitted to the Commission.

We encourage state Boards to review drafts and provide advice on proposals before they are formally submitted as Commission applications. We suggest that Boards establish optional pre-submission deadlines for the review of draft records proposals (36 CFR 1206.56(b)). Some Boards rely heavily on their state coordinators and the coordinator's staff to provide this assistance, but state Board members are also encouraged to provide this assistance. State coordinators should coordinate informal review by the Board members.

The Commission's deadlines are found in each [grant opportunity announcement](#).

Within 15 days after the deadline, all state coordinators receive a list of applications submitted against the deadline and indicating which proposals require Board review. The Commission staff provides a copy of each proposal to the appropriate coordinator, along with the grant opportunity announcement and a "[SHRAB Reviewer Grant Evaluation](#)" form. The coordinator then distributes these items to Board members.

The coordinator sets deadlines for completion of the evaluations and collects the forms. We suggest that all Board members be strongly encouraged to submit reviews, and that a minimum of five evaluations (or a number representing a quorum of the Board) serve as the basis for a Board recommendation. The Board may constitute a proposal review committee consisting of Board members to evaluate proposals. However, the entire Board, not just the committee, should endorse or support the final recommendation.

Although proposal evaluations may be conducted entirely by mail, fax or e-mail, it is preferable for the Board to meet to discuss the proposal and the Board recommendation. All reviewer evaluation forms are to be submitted to the Commission, and they should note any significant change in assessment that resulted from Board discussion.

All who review the proposal should complete and sign an evaluation form and submit it to the coordinator along with written comments or questions by the deadline indicated on the form or at the Board meeting where the proposal is discussed. The coordinator submits these forms and accompanying comments and questions, along with a summary of the evaluation and the Board's recommendation to the Commission staff.

The recommendation of the Board is made on the "[Summary Recommendation of the State Historical Records Advisory Board](#)" form, signed and submitted by the state coordinator or a designee if the coordinator has a conflict of interest. The Board will give each proposal a score from 1 to 5 and should recommend that the Commission either fully fund, partially fund, or reject each proposal. When a state Board has more than one proposal it should rank them.

## ***Review Calendar***

Grant Application Deadline	June 1	October 1
NHPRC Distributes List of Applications with copies to be reviewed by the SHRAB	June 15	October 15
Coordinator returns Summary Review form to NHPRC	August 15	December 15
Commission Meeting	November	May

### ***Review Guidance***

All who review an application submitted to the NHPRC should read the grant opportunity announcement to understand the NHPRC's purposes for offering this opportunity and should evaluate the proposal against those criteria. Reviewers should also evaluate to what extent the proposal supports the goals and objectives of the State Board, represented in its own strategic plan.

Reviewers should answer a few basic questions: is the project plan reasonable and are the planned results worth the costs? They may comment on the project budget and plan of work, especially if the project amount seems too little to accomplish the project goals, or more than is reasonable. However, it is not necessary to thoroughly examine the minute details or to look for or report minor arithmetic or typographical errors.

While the Board recommendation is not the only evaluation considered by the Commission, it carries great weight, especially for proposals that do not receive additional peer review. Nevertheless, the Commission is usually in the position of having more proposals recommended for funding than it can fund. This means that some worthy proposals inevitably do not receive Commission funding.

Commission staff will send to every applicant a copy of the coordinator's narrative summary of the Board review, and blind copies of peer reviewer comments, with Commission staff questions. The rating forms and individual Board member comments are not usually shared, although selected blind copies of individual Board member comments may be shared, if they will be particularly useful to the applicant. The Board summary, selected peer reviewer comments, and the applicant's response are reviewed by the Commission.

### ***SHRAB Performance Indicators***

The Commission will consider applications from State government agencies in states where there is an **active** Board (36 CFR 1206.54). The NHPRC awards grants to help develop and sustain active state Boards, and to provide leadership for the preservation of their state's documentary heritage. States seeking grant support from the Commission, whether in support of their Board or for other state programs, will want to demonstrate a commitment



to sustaining an active state Board. Below are some suggested performance indicators for active state Boards.

1. The Board and coordinator appointments are current, as demonstrated by annual submission of an updated state Board membership list with appointment expiration dates. Although members may continue to serve beyond the expiration of their term, it is strongly encouraged that Board appointments be kept current.
2. The Board's membership should meet the basic qualification and composition requirements set forth in the NHPRC regulations and outlined above. To assure that the Board meets these basic requirements, the state coordinator submits updated membership lists annually and certifies that the Board meets these membership requirements.
3. The Board should meet regularly, a suggested minimum of twice annually, but active Boards are strongly encouraged to meet three or four times per year and to hold at least one of those meetings outside of the state capital or in conjunction with a meeting of a relevant statewide professional organization.
4. The Board should report regularly on its activities, concerns, grant opportunities and current priorities through a variety of means. These may include creating and distributing an annual report, special reports, news releases, circulars, articles; the creation and updating of Web sites; or attendance at and participation in professional meetings of various constituencies, as well as other concerned groups and organizations.
5. The Board should develop, maintain, publicize, and distribute a state strategic plan for historical records programs, identifying particular priorities (a work plan) for Board action and a statement of priorities for grant funding. Planning is an ongoing activity, and it is suggested that in addition to regularly monitoring progress on the Board plan through measures identified in the plan, the Board review and revise its plan periodically.

The effective life of a Board plan will depend on many factors - the level of activity and achievement of the Board and the rapidity of change in the organizational as well as external environments, but to be effective Boards will want to make sure their plans address current opportunities and challenges.

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## Section III

### **State Historical Records Coordinators (SHRCs)**

#### ***Appointment, Resignation, Filling Vacancies and Deputy***

*Appointment.* The coordinator should be the full-time professional official in charge of the state archival program or agency, unless otherwise specified in state statute or regulation.

The coordinator serves ex officio, unless otherwise specified in state statute or regulation. The coordinator is not deemed to be an official or employee of the Federal Government and receives no Federal compensation for such service. (36 CFR 1206.42(b))

Although the coordinator receives no compensation, he or she may receive reimbursement for travel expenses incurred during the course of project activities and administration if the project budget allows (normally such costs are expected as administrative support for the Board provided by the state or as cost sharing on grants).

*Replacement.* In the event that the coordinator position is vacant or the coordinator is otherwise unable to serve, a deputy coordinator, if one has been designated, will serve as acting state coordinator until another coordinator is appointed. In the absence of a deputy coordinator, the state Board may select an acting coordinator until another coordinator is appointed, in order to conduct the necessary business of the Board. (36 CFR 1206.42(c))

The coordinator may designate a deputy state coordinator to assist in carrying out the duties and responsibilities of the coordinator and to serve as an acting coordinator at the coordinator's direction or upon the coordinator's resignation or inability to serve. (36 CFR 1206.43)

### ***Role and Responsibilities of SHRC***

*Duties.* The state coordinator is the officer responsible for the NHPRC state program. He or she reports the state Board appointment process, membership, and recommendations to the NHPRC on at least an annual basis and may serve a chair of the Board and may perform other duties following applicable state statute or regulation. (36 CFR 1206.42(a))

We suggest that the SHRC serve as chair of the Board, unless otherwise specified in state statute, and shall be the central coordinating officer for the historical records grant program in the state.

We suggest that the SHRC, as central coordinating officer, should perform a variety of administrative functions in support of the SHRAB including the following:

1. Assisting in or creating and distributing an annual report, special reports, news releases, circulars, and articles about the SHRAB and otherwise providing information on the NHPRC, the SHRAB, and its priorities and activities;
2. Serving as project director or providing administrative oversight for any grant projects carried out by the Board;
3. Assisting the Board in developing and maintaining a statewide strategic plan;
4. Advising potential grant applicants, soliciting and receiving applications as provided for in NHPRC program guidelines;
5. Managing the SHRAB grant proposal review by reviewing the lists of grant proposals received from NHPRC, communicating discrepancies, forwarding applications and forms to the Board, tabulating and summarizing results, and submitting the SHRAB's recommendation to the NHPRC;

6. Serving as the liaison between the SHRAB and other SHRABs and the SHRAB and the NHPRC;
7. Assisting the SHRAB in fostering and supporting cooperative networks and programs dealing with historical records;
8. Participating with other coordinators in meetings of the Council of State Archivists and to the extent possible in other national, regional, and state meetings, professional or public, that provide insight into archival and records challenges and promote common solutions to shared problems;
9. Assisting as appropriate in the Board appointment process and orienting new Board members.

The SHRC will maintain minutes and records relating to SHRAB action (See [Code of Federal Regulations](#) Part 1207 or Part 1210 for applicable Federal regulations governing records of grant projects) and will comply with applicable states laws and board policy concerning conflict of interest and public meetings.

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## Section IV

### **State Partnership Projects and State Administrative Board Support**

In addition to reviewing grant applications submitted to the NHPRC by other organizations in their states, state Boards may apply for grants on their own (or others may apply on their behalf). State Boards may apply for grants in any of the NHPRC program areas, like any other organization. They may also apply in the special States program area.

The NHPRC's 2004 Strategic plan made the States program area one of its priorities. Goal 3, and its objectives, is to:

**Promote a national network for state and local documentary preservation and utilization efforts** by (1) Supporting state historical records advisory Boards; (2) Continuing to support state regrant programs; and (3) Invigorating and extending a fully developed partnership among the states and NHPRC to fund the development of the national archival system.