

Maine Memory Network

PROJECT PLANNING GUIDE

The foundation of any successful local history project is planning. Think through your goals, interests, resources, time constraints, and other logistical issues *before you get started*. Set attainable goals, and try to be flexible. Consider the following steps and questions and feel free to contact us at any time for help.

1. Define Goals and Group Structure

- What goals do you have for your project? What experience do you want participants to have? How will the project fit into larger organizational/community goals?
- How much time can you spend on your project? A month? Three months? A year?
- How many organizations are involved in the project? Just one? Or are there partnering organizations? How many total individuals will be working together on the project? How much time can each devote on a weekly basis?
- Will a school be involved? How many students will participate, for how long, and in what capacity? How will the teacher embed the project in his/her curriculum? Do the team's overall goals mesh with the teacher's/school's goals, and the requirements of the curriculum?
- What outcomes do you want the group to have? What products do you want to end up with?
- How will you publicize and share your work with the larger community?

2. Conduct an Inventory / List Local Historical Resources

Conduct an inventory of the historical resources in your community. These resources will be critical to telling the history of your community, and include:

- Individuals
- Organizations
- Collections
- Books, Articles, etc.
- Buildings, Statues/Memorials, Landmarks
- Resources Outside of Your Community
- The Internet

3. Brainstorm Topics

Make a list of topics relevant to the history of your community. Be expansive, and be creative!

- Founding/settlement of the town: Why did people come? What drew them *there*? What might have pushed them from other places?
- Pre-European use of the region
- Ethnic culture in the area
- Important events in the history of your town
- Industry and the economy: how have people made a living at different points in the town's history? Subsistence farming? Commercial farming? Was there ever a factory?
- Participation in and relation to national events, social movements, etc.—e.g. wars, growth, Depression, civil rights, suffrage, temperance, etc.
- Prominent families or individuals—people who have shaped the town, provided local color, or gone on to “fame” as writers, reformers, business people, politicians, etc. or who otherwise led interesting (or mundane) lives
- Elderly voices that need to be captured

- Buildings that are at risk
- An upcoming anniversary of an event in the town's history
- A significant company leaving town, or a new one coming
- Other local initiatives: a Main Street project, or anniversary

Note: Once you've determined your topics, you must be sure you have the primary sources (the historic collections) and the secondary sources (the research material, local expertise) to support them. Carefully match everything up as you go so that you don't get too far along in the process and discover that you have chosen some great topics with little or no material to go with them.

4. Determine Products

Identify the way or ways you want to contribute to Maine Memory Network. These might include:

- Becoming a Contributing Partner and digitizing items
- Building an online exhibit
- Building an organizational website
- Building a community-based local history website

You might also find that there are other related local history activities you want to undertake, some of which can be connected to the MMN products listed above, such as:

- Oral history audio or video interviews
- A community newsletter
- An iMovie
- A physical exhibit at the historical society, school, public library, or somewhere else in the community
- Celebrations, festivals, dramatic productions, lecture series, etc.

5. Create A Workplan and Timeline

Determine who is responsible for what part of the work and how will the work get done. What roles will each individual play? Who will lead the group? Will everyone have a role in decision-making? Consider who will take on the following responsibilities:

- Team Coordinator/Leader
- Meeting monitor/note-taker (if not the team coordinator)
- Technology integrator
- Various workers (to actual do the activities)
- Communications/Marketing person
- Events set-up person (if applicable)
- School liaison (if necessary, and if there is no teacher in the core group)

Critical issues: How much time are you asking each participant to give to the project. Does each have the time and are they able to follow through? **Set attainable goals! Be flexible!**

6. Bring the Community In

Include your community in the process! People will be interested in learning about your project, and you will turn them into supporters of your work. Think about inviting community members to planning meetings, public forums, exhibit openings, and project celebrations.

Additional Resources: For more information on project planning, please see the Project Planning Section of our **Contributors Resources** page.