



# Council of State Archivists

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September 21, 2015

Kathleen Williams, Executive Director  
National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC)  
National Archives and Records Administration  
700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Room 114  
Washington, DC 20408-0001

Dear Kathleen:

The following comments are the result of our conversations with you and Dan in Austin, input we received during the webinar we hosted in August on the plan for State Board Coordinators and SHRAB members, and ongoing discussions by the CoSA Advocacy Committee.

We appreciate this opportunity to submit our comments and we look forward to our continued partnership in making the plan one that is responsive to all of NHPRC's stakeholders and supportive of the critical work we do.

Sincerely,

Matthew Blessing  
President



## **NHPRC Draft Strategic Plan Comments from the Council of State Archivists**

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The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) endorses the efforts of NARA and, specifically the NHPRC, to expand access to the nation's historical records. It appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback for the proposed NHPRC Strategic Plan.

### ACCESS:

- CoSA encourages NHPRC to aid the nation's archives and historical records repositories to fund and develop open source tools to enhance the abilities of institutions to provide efficient on-line access to permanent records and historical collections.
- CoSA believes that the future of access and the publishing of historical records, manuscripts and documentary editions is primarily, though not exclusively, on-line. The work of the NHPRC and its grant projects should be designed to maximize access by the public to the products created from the Commission's grants – which is now best provided through the Internet.
- CoSA understands that to in order to provide online access, collections and records need to be processed, providing the organizational foundation for digital collections.
- The State Archives community concurs with the four objectives listed in the draft strategic plan in the Expand Access section.

### ENGAGE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:

- CoSA encourages NHPRC to aid the nation's archives and historical records repositories to fund and develop adaptable open source tools to provide crowd-sourcing programs to allow mass indexing and transcription of historical records.
- CoSA suggests that NARA/NHPRC engagement with the American people include efforts to provide awareness of the role and value of archives.
- CoSA appreciates having the State Boards provide educational training for Citizen Archivists. We recommend that the State Board training programs include the training of volunteers, professionals, and allied staff in varied archival specialties.
- CoSA and its members look forward to defining the collaboration of grassroots projects with state boards.

- We propose that NHPRC work with CoSA to develop regional State Board training and mentoring programs to strengthen all State Boards and better engage the individual members.
- CoSA supports the three goals listed in the engage the American people section of the plan.

#### LEADERSHIP:

- CoSA would propose that NHPRC consider allowing national professional associations (NAGARA, SAA, and CoSA) to apply for and receive electronic records grants to provide regional and national level resources to address specific issues which some governments cannot individually address.
- CoSA encourages NHPRC to continue to provide assistance to develop and strengthen the records management, preservation, and access programs of electronic records at the state and local level.
- CoSA supports the four goals listed in the leadership through the National Archives.

#### PRACTICES:

- CoSA proposes that NHPRC work to strengthen the role and resources of the State Boards. Specifically we recommend that the State Boards:
  - Be encouraged to develop strategic plans addressing the historical records, state archives, and varied statewide archival needs of the state or territory.
  - Be utilized as mechanisms to advocate and educate the public about the role, importance and mission of archives.
- CoSA proposes that NHPRC recommend term limits be established for serving on the State Boards at three consecutive terms, or 12 consecutive years, to keep the State Boards vibrant.
- CoSA supports the goals outlined by NHPRC in the section related to Commission practices.