



AMERICA
250
NC

To be rather than to seem

Planning Guide for the 250th Anniversary
of the United States and North Carolina



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Refer to this guide when planning thematic events, to access educational materials, for branding guidance, or to understand our commemoration. This document will be expanded periodically, so be sure to check for updates on our [website](#).

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The NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources is a cabinet-level state agency that oversees 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, Five science museums, three aquariums, 41 state parks, the Zoo, the Symphony, the State Library, the State Archives, the Arts Council, the State Historic Preservation Office, the Office of State Archaeology, the American Indian Heritage Commission, and the African American Heritage Commission. All divisions of the agency will participate in the 250th commemoration.

OUR GOAL FOR THE SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

The 250th anniversary of the United States offers us a unique opportunity to reflect on how far we have come as a country, and to consider the ongoing work of our democracy. In preparing for this commemoration the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) seeks to generate a spirit of collaboration statewide. Our goal is to energize robust, comprehensive, and inclusive programs across ALL of North Carolina. We hope that this guide will assist in your efforts to develop events, programs and activities that will generate an increased interest in our state’s history and future.

WELCOME TO AMERICA 250 NC!

In 2026, America will commemorate 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the development of a new country dedicated to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” In the years since, our country has undergone many changes, and faced many challenges. To observe this momentous occasion, the U.S. Semi-quincentennial Commission was established by Congress ([P.L. 114-196](#)) to encourage Americans to remember our past, celebrate the present, and look forward to a promising future. America 250 NC is North Carolina’s commemoration planning organization.

The North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources is the statewide entity charged by Governor Cooper with the leadership of the commemoration for the state. To this end, DNCR is connecting with a variety of local, state, and federal partners to accomplish the goals of this commemoration. Each provides a unique viewpoint and approach to commemorating this anniversary.

As we prepare to mark this anniversary, we are focused on lifting the historical and contemporary voices of North Carolinians to present a more complete narrative of our state’s history. To this end, we are happy to introduce this America 250 NC planning guide. Here you will find our guiding themes and suggestions on how you can engage with the anniversary and additional resources.

North Carolina will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Revolution with wide ranging activities across a multi-year commemoration beginning on April 12, 2024, with a focus on 2026. Additional events will continue through 2033 to reflect our state’s Revolutionary history. Statewide activities sponsored by DNCR will include educational outreach, online resources, traveling and temporary exhibits, and a wide variety of commemorative events. The activities listed here are subject to change and

additional programs and products may be added as the commemoration grows. The commemoration’s goal is to empower North Carolinians to engage with 250 years of our state’s rich and diverse history.

COMMEMORATIVE THEMES

As we prepare to commemorate this important milestone, a cross-disciplinary group of academics, public historians, and educators identified interpretive themes that will guide our approach to developing events and outreach. These themes inform how we at DNCR are developing content that will define the statewide commemoration. We encourage you to refer to these themes as inspiration in planning your local activities.

The commemoration will focus on two broad concepts with complementary thematic avenues to explore these concepts: **REVOLUTIONARY NC** (the historical events of the Revolution and NC) and **WHEN ARE WE US?** (An exploration of the ideas of freedom, civic responsibility, overcoming challenges, and change as we lean into the ideals of democracy). The following themes are helpful in exploring these concepts in a variety of ways.

VISIONS OF FREEDOM

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE CONTINUING JOURNEY FOR NORTH CAROLINIANS TO SEEK TRUE FREEDOM.

The American Revolution was an important marker on the continuing journey towards true freedom for North Carolinians. This theme is a good place to identify political, military, or social Revolutionary era leaders who took bold steps to stand up to British rule. Here we will also highlight movements that pushed us closer to a better version of our state and nation – the Civil Rights Movement, Women’s Suffrage, even scientific and industrial developments – have all shaped who and what we are as North Carolinians.

GATHERING OF VOICES

NORTH CAROLINA’S MANY VOICES INSPIRE FUTURE GENERATIONS TO CREATE AND LEAD.

This commemoration cannot be told through a single lived experience. The historic and modern-day voices and stories of North Carolinians serve to inspire others to take innovative steps towards a “More Perfect Union,” and to ensure that all voices are heard. Our Revolutionary ancestors have much to tell us about their lives and experiences. Voices from our recent past can also inspire us to recognize that “out of many, one” voice can be heard, can make change, and can affect us all.

COMMON GROUND

PLACES CARRY OUR STORIES OF STRUGGLE, CREATION, AND CONNECTION TO ONE ANOTHER.

We must recognize that we are students, witnesses, and makers of history. Physical spaces hold shared stories of struggle, creation, and connection and our spaces of reverence (battlefields, historic spaces, the natural world) can echo happiness, violence, painful memories, evidence of struggles, rebirth, and growth. All hold the narratives of collective and individual struggle, creativity, and relationships to one another. We must always strive for common ground and ways to make our state a better place.

THEMES

VISIONS OF FREEDOM	GATHERING OF VOICES	COMMON GROUND
The American Revolution was a beginning of a continual journey for North Carolinians to seek true freedom.	North Carolina’s many voices inspire future generations to create and lead.	Places carry our stories of struggle, creation, and connection to one another.

ENGAGING WITH AMERICA 250 NC THEMES

Commemorative activities will empower North Carolinians to consider what the concepts set forth in the Declaration of Independence mean both historically and for modern day residents. **WHEN ARE WE US?** and **REVOLUTIONARY NC** are chosen to represent North Carolina's journey from the beginning of an experiment in democracy to the present. When planning thematic activities, it will be helpful to refer to the themes and topics listed below with more details, as well as some examples of events, exhibits, and topics that can be used around each theme.

When planning events, we encourage partners to align activities with our themes. Here are some examples of where certain topics might fall. Of course, it is possible that one topic may cross themes. For example, when examining protests, marches, and demonstrations for voting rights, you may consider the theme of **VISIONS OF FREEDOM**, as well as **COMMON GROUND**. Programming can help audiences consider their community's role in the founding of the United States, and their continued place in its history. Many **REVOLUTIONARY NC** concepts can cross multiple themes as well. For example, John Chavis, a free person of color, enlisted and fought as a Revolutionary War patriot soldier (**REVOLUTIONARY NC**) and later established a school in Raleigh (**WHEN ARE WE US?**).

A GATHERING OF VOICES

- »Immigration
- »Women/families/children
- »Regulators
- »Westward expansion
- »Protest/Counter-protest
- »American Indian experience
- »Latinx experience
- »Black experience
- »LGBTQ+ experience
- »Disability experience

VISIONS OF FREEDOM

- »Reconstruction
- »Civil Rights movement
- »American Indian rights
- »LGBTQ+ rights
- »Labor and labor movements
- »Disability and accessibility movement
- »Halifax Resolves

COMMON GROUND

- »Development of State Parks
- »Naturalization
- »Voting rights
- »Draft/military service
- »Agriculture

STATEWIDE RESOURCES

The America 250 NC team will be developing exhibits and displays related to this commemoration. While these will be on a large scale, it might be helpful to refer to these examples when developing your own programming.

EXHIBITS

MUSEUM EXHIBITS

DNCR museums will mount in person and online exhibitions to examine moments across 250 years that define the unique experiences of North Carolinians.

TRAVELING EXHIBITS

The DNCR Exhibit Committee has developed non-artifact-based panels that are designed to be flexible in setup and configuration for a variety of locations. These exhibits will travel around the state at no cost, please visit the America 250 NC website for more information and to request an exhibit.

ONE-DAY WONDERS

The State Archives will develop a special, pop-up exhibit featuring original documents from their collections. These exhibits are available for single day displays. Applications to host one of these exhibits will be available beginning in 2025.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

EDUCATOR RESOURCES

Before and during the commemoration, DNCR will create curriculum materials and sponsor teacher workshops on **REVOLUTIONARY NC**, and **WHEN ARE WE US?**, and associated themes. DNCR staff will contribute expertise, historic locations, and

digital materials associated with their collections to the program. Educational materials will be made widely available free of charge to educators, families, and educational entities.

TAR HEEL JUNIOR HISTORIAN

The statewide history club for students managed by the North Carolina Museum of History will highlight content related to the themes across the commemoration.

ANCHOR

[\(A North Carolina History Online Resource\)](#) The online resource will grow with additional materials that support commemorative themes through digital imagery of collection materials from across the department accompanied by interpretive essays, and including lesson plans, audiovisual resources, and downloadable documents kits with suggested classroom activities.

ARCHAEOLOGY DAYS

The Office of State Archaeology will sponsor public excavation events at selected state historic sites (e.g., Halifax, and Brunswick Town) with coordinated student involvement.

ONLINE AND OTHER RESOURCES

CENTRAL COORDINATING WEBSITE

A new commemorative web portal will contain: an online joint calendar of commemorative activities; updated Timeline of the Revolution; centralized access to other DNCR offerings such as [ANCHOR](#), [NCPedia](#); online exhibits.

REVOLUTIONARY NC TRAILS

Development of online resource materials to include battlefields and other places of interest. Additional development of the trail will include installation of informational waysides at select locations.

DIGITIZATION OF MATERIALS

DNCR entities will digitize and provide greater access to collections along commemorative themes to emphasize the underrepresented stories of the period, genealogical value, and support of the K-12 curriculum.

PODCASTS/BLOG/NEWSLETTER

Agency blogs, newsletters, podcasts and video series will feature new commemoration resources, program highlights, and our collections related to the commemoration themes.

ONLINE CLASS(ES) AND EVENTS

Online learning opportunities for adult learners on topics such as “Finding Revolutionary Ancestry,” trivia contests, and other topics.

PUBLICATIONS

Special issues of Tar Heel Junior Historian (Museum of History), the North Carolina Historical Review (Office of Historical Research), a children’s book series, and a book about the clashes of Cornwallis and Greene as they battled in the state near the end of the war.

AMERICA 250 NC COUNTY COMMITTEES

The heart of the American 250 NC commemoration lies within the county committees. These committees are dedicated to planning and organizing events, projects, and initiatives at the county level. They serve as the local conduit to the statewide commemorative programming, amplifying the rich history of our state and local communities. They also seek to foster participation of a wide variety of local organizations and groups to participate in creating America 250 NC events and resources.

We encourage county committees to contain membership spanning diverse perspectives and skills. Inclusion of members from a variety of sectors, including government, cultural heritage institutions, regional American Indian tribes, non-profits, tourism agencies, civic organizations, and community groups ensures that your America 250 NC events will reach the widest variety of audiences. The DNCR America 250 NC team welcomes the opportunity to consult with your committee on organization issues and programming suggestions. Please contact us at: America250NC@dncr.nc.gov

We ask that each county have only one official committee and that they gather a cross-section of the community to serve. To be officially recognized at the central county body coordinating the local America 250 NC commemorative activities, county commissioners must pass and sign the resolution. A simple resolution noting the creation of the committee and its alignment with the statewide America 250 NC mission can serve as the official designation for the group. A sample resolution is below:

RESOLUTION OF _____ COUNTY

RECOGNIZING AND APPROVING OF THE _____ COUNTY

OFFICIAL AMERICA 250 NC COMMITTEE

A resolution of _____ County, North Carolina, supporting the America 250 NC committee for the United States semiquincentennial (AMERICA 250 NC).

WHEREAS, Roy Cooper, Governor of North Carolina, created AMERICA 250 NC to plan, encourage, develop, and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States and North Carolina’s integral role in that event and the role of its people on the nation’s past, present, and future: and

WHEREAS, AMERICA 250 NC has a mission to engage ALL North Carolinians and ALL 100 counties through their many signatures and officially recognized programs, projects, and events over the commemoration by inspiring future leaders and celebrating North Carolina’s contributions to the nation over the last 250 years; and

WHEREAS, by adoption of America 250 NC’s mission, _____ County Committee is officially formed to achieve the goals of AMERICA 250 NC.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the County of _____ hereby endorses AMERICA 250 NC and its mission; and

RESOLVED, the County of _____ officially establishes an AMERICA 250 NC Committee made up of a diverse group of citizens to work with AMERICA 250 NC on any and all activities. The participants of the _____ County Committee will be strictly voluntary roles and there will be no compensation for participation.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the _____ legislative delegation and the AMERICA 250 NC Committee.

ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 202__.

Official county committees should also complete the registration and contact form that includes membership information, as well as a designated contact person to be a liaison with the statewide America 250 NC leadership. Be advised that the liaison’s name and email address will be posted on the website. The contact form can be found on the America 250 website.

Local grant funds are available during FY2023-2024 and FY 2024-2025 to underwrite the costs of local commemorative events and programming. One type of local grant is available exclusively to official county committees during the FY 2023-2024.

Are you wondering how you can get involved with others in your community or at your museum, library, or historic site?

Here are some suggestions:

EXPLORE DNCR RESOURCES FOR PLANNING LOCAL EVENTS, EXHIBITS, AND PROGRAMS

- » The State Archives YouTube channel includes videos from a recorded series of workshops on community collecting and storytelling for the America 250 NC commemoration.
- » Watch the America 250 NC website for additional resources with tips and suggestions for local programming, including resources from organizations such as the American Association of State and Local History.

EMBRACE HISTORY WITH HISTORY-MINDED PROGRAMS

- » Host a lecture series by inviting experts on NC history to speak on their work at a local library, school, museum, or park.
- » Host a traveling exhibit from DNCR. Non-artifact exhibits will be available to travel to a variety of locations across the state. Some print-on-demand exhibit panels will also be available. Consider adding local content to the exhibit.

- » Highlight local history and people with an event or program focused on your visions of freedom, gathering of voices, or common ground.
- » Augment an existing festival, parade, or annual event by adding America 250 NC themes, activities, and costumed living historians to an annual event to highlight the commemoration without planning an entirely new event.
- » Commemorate important national and local events through public programs, such as a reading of the Declaration of Independence in your community on July 4, 2026.
- » Sponsor an essay or poster contest for local K-12 students using the America 250 NC themes and local or statewide historical topics.

EMBRACE THE ARTS WITH YOUR LOCAL ARTS COUNCIL

- » Musical performances, theater, and artist exhibitions by artists young and old can share a spirit of pride in your community and its history.
- » Community storytelling with local storytellers can entertain and educate even as they encourage community elders to share their history through oral history projects.
- » Hold a film screening-Consider screening a film related to one of the topics mentioned, such as the Revolutionary War or the civil rights movement. Develop questions to engage the audience in viewing.

EXPLORE YOUR AREA'S NATURAL HISTORY

- » Host a nature walk using a leader who can highlight your region's natural landscapes from 250 years ago.
- » Develop a program or story walk about the revival of iconic species of state and nation, such as the red wolf or the bald eagle.

ENCOURAGE LITERACY WITH YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

- » Start a book club to discuss topics related to the Revolutionary War, civil rights, colonial food, and many more!
- » Request a children's America 250 NC activity bag for your local libraries or cultural institutions. These bags include a selection of children's books and activities families can explore together. Be advised that quantities are limited.
- » Host story times or build a story walk with a children's book about the Revolutionary War. Watch for the release of DNCR's four children's books related to the commemoration themes.

SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

- » Whatever you decide to do, share it! Tag us @AMERICA250NC in your commemorations and learning experiences and we will share on our platform. Also consider making Facebook groups to build community around topics and experiences.

WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT YOU DO!



KEEPING UP TO DATE WITH AMERICA 250 NC

While we encourage you to consider developing events and educational programs to align with the commemoration, there are several low-input possibilities for making your voice and impact heard. To keep up to date on our plans for the commemoration, visit America250.nc.gov

NEWSLETTER

Our newsletter is the quickest and most effective way to learn about our progress and plans. This is where you will find updates on our themes, our events, and our planning across the state. You can sign up on our [website](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA

As we ramp up our activities, we will be sharing across [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). We encourage you to follow us and share with your networks.

EVENT SUBMISSION

Planning an event? Submitting to the America 250 NC calendar is easy! Fill out [this form](#) for consideration. Be sure to check the content and type of event against our themes to be sure it is relevant to the commemoration.

BLOG SUBMISSION

We want to hear from you! It's important to us that diverse North Carolinian voices are shared on our platform. Our blog will feature submissions from academics, creatives, and public reflections on our state's history. If you're interested in submitting a piece, please reach out to America250NC@dncr.nc.gov

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND MEDIA

For additional resources about how North Carolina is preparing for the 250th anniversary, including publications, webinars recordings, blog posts, and other materials, visit America250.nc.gov

For additional information about the U.S. Semi-quincentennial Commission and America 250, visit america250.org

American Association for State and Local History Guide and Programs: <https://aaslh.org/programs/250th/>

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

From within the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

AMERICA250NC

<https://www.america250.nc.gov/>

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

<https://www.dncr.nc.gov/>

STATE LIBRARY OF NORTH CAROLINA

<https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/>

STATE LIBRARY GUIDES

<https://statelibrary.ncdcr.libguides.com/>

STATE ARCHIVES OF NORTH CAROLINA

<https://archives.ncdcr.gov/>

STATE ARCHIVES & STATE LIBRARY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/>

NCPEdia (THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ALL THINGS NORTH CAROLINA)

<https://ncpedia.org/>

ANCHOR (ONLINE TEXTBOOK OF ALL NC HISTORY)

<https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/anchor>

NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM OF HISTORY

<https://www.ncmuseumofhistory.org/>

FEDERATION OF NC HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

<https://www.dncr.nc.gov/about-us/history/federation-north-carolina-historical-societies>

STATE ARCHIVES ORAL HISTORY SECTION

<https://archives.ncdcr.gov/researchers/collections/oral-histories>

FAMILY HISTORY & GENEALOGY

<https://www.dncr.nc.gov/programs-services/family-history-genealogy>

NORTH CAROLINA IN THE US REVOLUTION

<https://www.ncpedia.org/history/usrevolution/overview>

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN NC

https://www.carolana.com/NC/Revolution/NC_Revolutionary_War_Known_Battles_Skirmishes.htm

“IT’S REVOLUTIONARY” NC TRIP IDEAS

<https://www.dncr.nc.gov/explore/trip-ideas/its-revolutionary>

NORTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKERS


<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/859056849ffd-4da2b01ac3d961c988b5>

NORTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL MARKER PROGRAM

<https://www.dncr.nc.gov/about-us/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program>

AMERICA 250 NC LOGOS AND BRANDING GUIDES

NOTES

 ur logos are available for use to our partners! If you are interested in becoming a partner, please visit our [website](#) to access our partner toolkit.



The background of the image features a stylized American flag. The top-left corner shows the blue field with white stars, while the rest of the image is filled with diagonal stripes of red and white. The stripes are thick and run from the top-left towards the bottom-right.

A M E R I C A

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