New Hampshire Historical Society's *Local Historical Society Initiative*
Summary Report on Research Phase

(Prepared by William P. Veillette, January 22, 2008)

INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to summarize the efforts that the New Hampshire Historical Society has undertaken to assist local historical societies with their missions, increase their memberships, and make them sustainable in perpetuity.

EFFORTS PRIOR TO 2005

The New Hampshire Historical Society is a 185-year-old institution. For the first 140 years, the Society focused almost exclusively on its own mission to "discover, procure, and preserve whatever may relate to the natural, civil, literary, and ecclesiastical history of the United States in general, and of this state in particular." By the 1960s, it began to look outward and behave more openly as a public institution. The following timeline represents the modest efforts that the Society made to support local historical societies prior to 2005.

1951 Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire was incorporated independent of the New Hampshire Historical Society.

1963 The Society provided workshops and technical services for local historical societies in collaboration with the Association.

1987 The Society began to interact on a more regular basis with the Association, and technical workshops for local societies became an ongoing program.

1990 The Society adopted its first strategic plan (25-year horizon), which included the recognition that it needed to reach out even more to the public.

1999 The Society's strategic plan update included a more explicit goal of establishing "formal and ongoing means to facilitate the work of local organizations."

2001 The Society surveyed its members and 47% said that "assisting local historical societies" was "very important," but only 22% indicated satisfaction with the Society's efforts in this respect.

Although the intentions stated in the Society's past strategic plans to reach out to the public and help local historical societies were admirable, major efforts beyond technical workshops were not implemented. This is somewhat understandable in that the Society purchased its museum building in 1990 just as it completed its first strategic plan. The fundraising for and opening of the museum in 1995 became a major undertaking that took

significant management attention and institutional resources. Museum exhibitions and education programs became the priority. When longtime executive director John Frisbee died in 2002, the Society experienced a difficult management transition until 2005 when it regained its footing. With the museum in good shape and a new leadership team in place, the Society then prepared to refocus its efforts on outreach.

FOCUS SINCE 2005

In March 2005, the New Hampshire Historical Society adopted a revised business plan that called in part for it to "establish the Society as truly a statewide organization." The Society decided that one way to accomplish this goal would be to collaborate with other organizations to "reach out to local historical societies to assist them with membership development, collections management, education programs, etc."

There are 310 historical organizations in New Hampshire, of which 206 are local historical societies with roughly 20,000 members in total. The oldest of these societies was founded in 1861 (Durham) and the newest—according to available data—was founded in 2005 (Bartlett). A few local societies have a paid staff, sizable membership, and an endowment. But most are small, volunteer-run organizations. Whether big or small, the New Hampshire Historical Society intended to find out how it could provide support to these valuable organizations with which it shares the goal of saving, preserving, and promoting state and local history.

The Society started by becoming a dues-paying member of almost all of the 206 local historical societies that charge membership dues. (A few made us complimentary members, but two wouldn't allow us to join!) The Society did this primarily to show support, but also to receive the local historical societies' newsletters as a way of staying in touch with their activities and issues. The executive director of the Society personally reads every newsletter. They are then archived in the Society's files and available for use by its staff.

LOCAL MEMBER SURVEY

In July 2005, the Society received a grant from The Corporate Fund to survey the members of local historical societies. The purpose of the survey was to start with the "customer" and find out why these members joined their local historical societies, what they expected out of them, and whether those expectations were being met. It took all summer and fall to design the survey and gather a statistically significant sampling of names and telephone numbers for potential survey participants. (The extended time required to communicate with local historical societies as a group has been an important lesson learned from our work thus far.)

A telephone survey was finally conducted in February 2006 by The Survey Center at the University of New Hampshire. For the survey, 401 local society members were

randomly selected. The major topics in the survey included their interest in history and the local historical society, importance and satisfaction of local historical society services and offerings, and awareness and opinions of the New Hampshire Historical Society and other New Hampshire organizations. The results of the survey are in the attached report: *New Hampshire Historical Society Survey of Members of Local Historical Societies,* prepared by Tracy Fowler and Andrew E. Smith, The Survey Center, University of New Hampshire, March 2006.

Some highlights of the member survey:

Profile

The profile of local historical society members is interesting:

- 72% have lived in N.H. more than 20 years
- 69% have college degrees (vs. 29% for N.H. as a whole)
- 61% are over 40 years old (vs. median age of 37 in N.H.)
- 59% are female (vs. 51% for N.H.)
- 9% have their primary residence out-of-state (vs. 19% for N.H. Historical Society members)

Interests

When asked why they joined their local society, members stated they were interested in local history (68%), wanted history to be preserved (41%), and wanted to support the preservation of historic buildings in their town (31%).

The focus of the New Hampshire Historical Society tends to be more on state than local history (although one could argue that all stories are ultimately local), and it has traditionally not been directly involved in historic preservation (especially since the founding of the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance in 1985). The opportunity suggested here is for the Society to help local societies "preserve history."

Programs

When asked on a scale of one to five which programs they considered most important, local members chose historic preservation (3.71), collections of photographs/documents (3.27), museum exhibitions (3.10), and lectures (3.08). (These were also the programs with which members were most satisfied.) Online collections catalogs and museum store discounts ranked lowest, which was probably because hardly any local societies offer such services. And, curiously, school programs and social activities ranked high in satisfaction, but relatively low in importance.

Collaboration

The vast majority of local members believe that the New Hampshire Historical Society and their local society should collaborate at least somewhat closely (79%). Thirteen percent of local members reported that they are also members of the New Hampshire Historical Society, which calculates to roughly 50% of the Society's members. The next closest "historical" organization of which locals are also members is the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance (7%), which calculates to roughly 90% of the Alliance's members.

These results jibe very nicely with the local members' stated interests in history and historic preservation and suggest that the New Hampshire Historical Society and the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance should maintain close ties. (As of this writing, the executive director of the Society serves on the board of the Alliance as immediate past chairman.)

Public Media

Local historical society members are big supporters of the public media: 37% are members of New Hampshire Public Television (roughly 1/4 of NHPTV members) and 26% are members of New Hampshire Public Radio (roughly 1/3 of NHPR members).

This suggests an excellent opportunity for joint programming on local history and preservation topics with those media, especially with NHPR because of the attraction of its younger, growing audience, and lower production costs.

This membership survey certainly yielded interesting results, but it also begged additional questions, which prompted the Society to conduct a second survey of local historical society leaders.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP SURVEY

In June 2006, we mailed a paper survey to the boards of directors of 206 local historical societies to determine where they see their strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities and risks. Because interest in local history and historic preservation ranked so high with local society members, we invited the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance and the Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire to collaborate in drafting this survey. A very high 109 of the local societies (53%) responded to the survey. The results are in the attached report: *Results of survey of local historical society leadership (Summer/Fall 2006).*

Some highlights of the leadership survey:

Profile

The "average" local historical society:

- Is an independent, nonprofit organization that receives no government funding.
- Is a registered 501(c)(3).
- Has 100 members.
- Receives the majority of its revenues from membership dues and "fundraisers" such as merchandise sales, etc.
- Occupies either its own building or a municipal building rented for a nominal amount or free.
- Is run by a working board of directors that typically has no term limits and does all the work of their society.
- Is concerned about an aging membership and lack of new volunteers.

- Is generally optimistic about the future. — 67%

Strengths
Of the four programs that their members had deemed most important, local societies reported that they were reliable at providing lectures (94%) and museum exhibitions (81%). They were less engaged in historic preservation activities (43%) and cataloging their collections (24%). This is understandable in that the latter two activities are much more dynamic and/or labor-intensive.

This suggests an opportunity for the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance to continue its work with local societies on preservation issues (12% indicated they were currently working on a major historic preservation project) and for the New Hampshire Historical Society to assist them with cataloging their collections (22% identified cataloging as a major project on which they were currently working).

Weaknesses
The activities in which the local societies felt there was the most room for improvement were:

- Membership development (80%) and fundraising (65%)
- Public awareness of local history (78%) — PR/education — 1% working on it!
- Collections storage (77%) and collections care & management (74%)
- Cataloging collections (65%)

Membership Development & Fundraising
Although membership development was recognized as the weakest activity, only 1% of local societies identified it as a project on which they were currently working. Twenty-five percent of local societies have experienced a decline in members in the past five years, 43% are stable, and 32% have experienced an increase. And, only 5% are currently engaged in a major fundraising effort.

This presents an opportunity for the New Hampshire Historical Society to study what the "32%" and "5%" are doing well and use their "best practices" to develop a simple model for membership development and fundraising that is tailored to the unique circumstances of volunteer-run local historical societies.

Public Awareness
When asked what the New Hampshire Historical Society could be doing to get more people throughout the state interested in history, a strong plurality (23%) suggested school programs. This is a curious response for several reasons:

- The Society has been offering school programs since 1964 and now educates nearly 80% of the state's 4th graders both at its museum in Concord and in outreach programs in classrooms around the entire state. There is some room for increasing the participation in these programs through additional outreach, but the market is mostly saturated. The Society also offers educational programs for 5th

through 8th graders and has a well-developed course for high school students preparing to take the United States History Advanced Placement examination.

- The members of the local societies consider school programs to be of low importance.
- Only 1% of the leaders of local societies are working on an education project, which indicates they do not view school programs as a priority for their own organizations.

It is unclear why the local societies identified school programs as a way for the Society to increase interest in history but have not made them a higher priority locally to address their concern for lack of "public awareness of local history." At some point, it may be worth exploring this issue in greater detail. But at this stage, considering the relatively low interest among local members and leaders in school programs, it is probably more prudent to help them with their self-identified priorities.

From the Society's viewpoint, it believes there is a mutually beneficial opportunity for New Hampshire Public Radio and New Hampshire Public Television to increase public awareness of local history by providing relatively more programming on these subjects. In fact, in a survey that NHPTV conducted of its members in the spring of 2005, the majority of the participants indicated that they would tune in more if there were more programming on local history (61% of respondents), local topics (56%) and history in general (47%). These three subjects ranked at the very top of the respondents' interests, and did so by a large margin relative to other topics such as nature, science, health and music.

Collections Storage, Care, and Management

Fifty-four percent of local societies own a building or buildings and 50% store their collections in them. But, 48% store their collections in a municipal building, and 13% store them in members' houses. (These percentages add up to greater than 100% because some store their collections in multiple places.) Fourteen percent of local societies identified building and space needs as a major project on which they are working.

This state of affairs—along with their recognition that collection storage and care is a weakness—presents an additional case for the Society to study the feasibility of building a collections storage facility in collaboration with other large New Hampshire collecting institutions. This facility could allow a local society to safely store either one valuable object or its entire collections there, depending on its needs. It also may suggest the need to study the issues associated with the local societies' existing buildings or other facilities acquired through historic preservation activities.

Cataloging Collections

Although the local societies indicate that 63% of their collections (on average) are "cataloged," there is reason to believe that in most cases this represents an inventory rather than a reasonably complete catalog record. But, happily, a plurality of local societies (22%) is working on cataloging its collections—by far the top project identified.

Forty-five percent are using catalog software for storing their data, and half of those are using a variety of generic database programs such as FileMaker Pro or Microsoft Access.

This presents an opportunity for the New Hampshire Historical Society to assist local societies with cataloging and digitizing their collections, and making those electronic databases accessible online. Bearing in mind that local members consider photographs the most important collection (3.27 on a scale of 5.00) and a plurality of the leaders consider photographs the most important thing to collect (38%), we should begin with the photographic collection. (Note: In a survey of New Hampshire Historical Society's members in 2001, "availability of photos" was in the top three in terms of importance of services and activities offered. And the Society has not yet cataloged its 200,000 photographs, which it could and should do as a project alongside the local societies.)

Web Sites

Most local societies (68%) do not have a Web site. This presents an opportunity for the Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire to assist them with creating a Web presence (the Association offers a free Web page to its members) and for the Society to use its Web site as an option to make the collections of local societies accessible through its online catalog.

Exhibitions

While the vast majority of local societies exhibit their museum collections, and their members are satisfied with the effort, only 10% of local societies indicated that they were currently working on an exhibition as a major project. This implies that exhibitions at these all-volunteer societies are relatively static and unchanging, which again makes sense because of the labor-intensive nature of mounting changing exhibitions.

When asked, "If the New Hampshire Historical Society were to dedicate a portion of its museum space to displaying items from the collections of local historical societies, would your society be interested in participating?" 62% said, "Yes." This suggests that the Society should move forward with its conceptual plans to free up dedicated space in the museum for such displays.

Support Network

Local societies on the whole take modest advantage of the support network available to them through various regional and statewide supporting organizations. The three organizations (or organization types) that locals "worked with" (i.e., collaborated with or used the services of) the most are: public library (57%), New Hampshire Humanities Council (46%), and New Hampshire Historical Society (27%). The top three institutions of which local societies are organizational members are: Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire (52%), New Hampshire Historical Society (39%), and New Hampshire Preservation Alliance (14%). Perhaps not surprisingly, professional trade organizations such as the American Association of Museums, the American Association for State and Local History, and the New England Museum Association ranked very low as resources for local societies.

Both the member and leadership surveys identified opportunities for greater service to local societies and confirmed their willingness to collaborate. But, the results also underscored the need to partner with other statewide New Hampshire organizations to provide local societies with service and support. While the New Hampshire Historical Society could readily create programs to support the variety of issues that local societies face, it felt it would be best to partner with organizations that have already developed a core competence in those areas. Taking advantage of the strengths and existing offerings of established organizations would prevent wasting resources on developing redundant programs. Consequently, the Society identified the following statewide organizations as the best to work with it in supporting local societies: New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, New Hampshire Humanities Council, and Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire.

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

With the completion of the member and leadership surveys, the Society felt that it needed to tour the state to present and discuss the above findings directly with the leaders and members of local historical societies. Doing this face-to-face would offer the chance to have a conversation about what the survey results mean and to get frank reaction to the proposals for helping local societies.

Panelists

From the survey results, it was clear that local societies avail themselves of the services of four statewide organizations more than any others and would benefit by having these organizations collaborate—rather than compete—in serving them. Consequently, the panel for the town hall meetings consisted of the chief executives of these four organizations, plus one additional organization that represented the special circumstances and needs of the North Country:

- Bill Veillette, Executive Director, New Hampshire Historical Society, to serve as moderator and address collections storage/care/cataloging/digitizing and membership development.
- Jennifer Goodman, Executive Director, New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, to address historic preservation and local project management.
- Deborah Watrous, Executive Director, New Hampshire Humanities Council, to address humanities programming and grants.
- Tom Haynes, President, Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire, to address communications and networking.
- Frumi Selchen, Executive Director, Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire (for Lincoln and Berlin meetings only), to address programming and networking in the North Country.

Venues

With generous financial assistance once again from The Corporate Fund, the Society was able to conduct a series of seven "town hall" meetings from October 9 to November 8, 2007, at the following regional locations:

- Historical Society of Cheshire County (Keene)
- Nashua Historical Society
- Portsmouth Historical Society
- New London Historical Society
- Belknap Mill (Laconia)
- Upper Pemigewasset Historical Society (Lincoln)
- Northern Forest Heritage Park (Berlin)

Attendance
Ninety-eight leaders from 61 local historical societies participated in the meetings, representing 30% of the 206 local societies in New Hampshire. This strong turn-out suggested that local historical societies are anxious to establish a relationship with the New Hampshire Historical Society and its statewide peers and are looking for assistance in strengthening their operations.

Agenda
The agenda for the meetings was straightforward: to present a summary and our interpretation of the survey results; confirm through conversation that we were "reading the tea leaves" properly; present our conceptual ideas for collaboration and partnerships; and—most importantly—listen to reactions and suggestions.

As an ice-breaker and to assess the audience's frame of mind, we started each meeting by asking the participants to introduce themselves and share the "biggest burning issue" at their local society. Not surprisingly, their issues mirrored the responses in the surveys.

In addition, the panel presented a short slide show of examples of "best practices" at thirteen local historical societies around the state. The best practices included archives management, collections care, historic preservation, interpretive programming, documentation, networking, membership development, online collections access, house museums, and volunteer project management.

Anticipated Feedback
We heard a lot of feedback that supported the survey responses, especially those from the leadership survey. Here is a sampling of this anticipated feedback

- Space Needs: Many of the participants talked about the need for display, storage, work, and meeting space because they did not have a building to call home, their current building is not big enough, etc. Many were either seeking a suitable historic property to use or looking to expand the use of an existing building. For those who had buildings, many talked about the need to address code, heating, and plumbing issues to increase accessibility and safety. Many of the board members perform their societies' work out of their homes. These issues could present an obstacle to assisting local societies with projects such as collections cataloging. On the other hand, they bolster the case for exploring the feasibility of building a facility that could be available to local societies to process and store

their collections alongside those of the larger New Hampshire collecting institutions.

- Collections: There was very strong support for the idea of the New Hampshire Historical Society assisting local societies with cataloging and digitizing their photographic collections and making those collections accessible online.
- Membership: There was very high interest in the idea of the New Hampshire Historical Society creating a simple model for membership development tailored to the needs of volunteer-run local societies.
- Fundraising: Most of the participants were interested in knowing about grant sources. The local societies are generally not familiar with the many resources for finding grant opportunities because they do not have professional development officers who are schooled in this basic subject. There is an opportunity here for the Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire to use its Web site as a portal to link the local societies with grant sources.
- Programming: The overwhelming majority of local societies utilized the "Humanities To Go!" services of the New Hampshire Humanities Council and were appreciative of the simplified process for applying for funds to pay the honoraria.
- Training: There is a strong demand for a regular annual schedule of technical workshops, and for those workshops to be held out in the regions where they would be more convenient to the local societies.
- Networking: They uniformly commented on feedback forms that they were interested—and relieved—to learn that other local societies shared their same challenges. They wanted more opportunities to network with their peers, mostly to learn what others are doing.

Unanticipated Feedback

We heard some feedback that was unanticipated, but not necessarily surprising. Here is a sampling of this unanticipated feedback:

- Space Needs: There were a number of comments indicating that the municipal government "dumps" their vacant buildings on the local society, thereby creating a financial burden for the society to have to maintain the building or buildings. In one case, the society had accepted responsibility for four buildings. This presents an opportunity for the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance to assist those societies with formulating alternative stewardship options for these historic properties.
- Historic Preservation: In two cases, the participants commented that work on saving historic structures was taking time away from other important activities such as cataloging collections or taking care of their own historic buildings. This presents an opportunity for the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance to either provide assistance to these societies or help them create or strengthen heritage commissions or other suitable groups to advance individual preservation projects or needed preservation planning and communication and thereby create a "division of labor" so that the societies and commissions can work together to preserve both buildings and collections.

- Collections: There were a number of interesting comments about collections:
    - A few societies expressed concern about the lack of care and access to historic town records and indicated that the selectmen were resistant to allowing them to care for those collections.
    - Some societies felt like they were considered the "town attic," meaning that residents use them as a place to donate anything that is "old" and no longer wanted.
    - Several societies are experiencing problems with moisture in their buildings that is damaging their collections.
    - In one instance, the president of a local society has been purchasing items for the collections with his personal funds because the local society does not have a budget for acquisitions. He wants to donate these items to his own society, but he is not confident that it will have the wherewithal to care for them over the long run.
    - One local society recently lost its entire collections. The collections were being stored in the home of its longtime curator and were either uncataloged or the records were lost, making it impossible to prove ownership. The curator died and his heirs auctioned off the local society's collections with his estate.
- Membership/Volunteers: Almost every local society finds that it does not have enough volunteers—especially young volunteers—to do all the work of the society. The same few people are doing all of the work and in many cases have been doing so for years. This held true whether the society was experiencing declining or increasing membership. Increasing membership translates into more money, but not necessarily more volunteers. (See more on this in the "What They Didn't Mention" section below.) They also have found that people are more willing to join than to show up at their programs and visit their museums.
- Fundraising: The local societies in the North Country were the most focused on fundraising issues. But, curiously, they showed less inclination than in the other regions to take the initiative to seek out and write their own grants. They wanted someone else to do it for them.
- Public Awareness: There were many comments that their local society was a "best kept secret."

What They Didn't Mention

One of the top concerns that went to every other issue is the lack of enough volunteers to do all the work that needs to be done. Local societies have working boards, so the volunteers tend to be the board members themselves. A small group of people does all the work—often for years.

Almost every society mentioned the need to attract "new blood" or "young people." It appeared to us that governance practices could be impeding this in many cases. Yet governance was mentioned only once (by a young, former president).

For example, because few local societies have term limits, the same people often serve on the boards for years. This can create the impression that local societies are private clubs,

which makes them seem less welcoming to an outsider. Putting in place term limits and an active recruiting process for board members might help in some of these cases.

In other cases, some societies rely very heavily—perhaps too heavily—on one person to lead the charge and to serve as a benefactor. What happens when that person moves or dies? Who will fill the void? A succession plan for key volunteers and a diverse donor cultivation program might help in some of these cases.

We did hear anecdotal evidence that many of the local societies have gone through cycles of activity followed by inactivity. There may be an opportunity for the New Hampshire Historical Society to seek a partner with expertise in governance to help the local societies break this cycle. But, more study will be needed to fully understand the issue and whether governance is at the root of the problem, or something else.

The societies also did not identify the need to improve their exhibitions. Exhibitions ranked high among their members' interests and satisfaction, which may be why the leaders were also satisfied with them. This may suggest that visitors to local societies' museums neither expect nor want highly-polished productions. But, there may be a missed opportunity to change exhibitions more frequently as a way to stimulate increased visitation to their museums, which could help attract members and volunteers by showing increased activity.

Finally, they also did not emphasize the need for professional assessment and planning for historic preservation projects, building care, and collections care. Understandably, many volunteer organizations ignore this step because they think it is too expensive or unnecessary whereas a small dose of these kinds of assistance yields less expensive and more effective results.

Lessons Learned

The following are some lessons learned from the town hall meeting project:

- There is no ideal time to hold a business meeting with local societies during the work week. The daytime is good for retired folk, but bad for working folk (especially those with less flexible schedules). Evenings are better for working folk, but less desirable for older volunteers because of driving after dark (except in the summer).
- Communication is extremely difficult. It takes a long time to get the word out to volunteer-run organizations. We used a variety of approaches: letter, e-mail, e-newsletter, and telephone. We are certain that all societies received our correspondence, but could not control whether it then got to the right person or persons after that.
- The local historical societies were very grateful that we came to them rather than asking them to attend one big meeting in Concord. It was much more expensive and time-consuming to do it that way, but it was absolutely the right thing to do and it definitely increased participation.
- The local leaders seemed to enjoy the inspirational examples of best practices by their peers and learning that others shared their same issues.

- The supporting organizations are never going to have enough staff to do one-on-one technical assistance for local societies. It is critical that we create opportunities for local societies to network with and mentor each other.

Proposed Programs/Projects—New Hampshire Historical Society
Based on the surveys and town hall meetings, the New Hampshire Historical Society will focus on the following proposed programs/projects:

- Assist local historical societies with cataloging and digitizing their collections and making those electronic databases accessible online, beginning with their photographic collections.
- Construct a collections storage facility in collaboration with other large New Hampshire collecting institutions. This facility could allow a local historical society to safely store either one valuable object or all its collections there, depending on its needs.
- Create a simple model for membership development and fundraising that is tailored to the circumstances of volunteer-run local historical societies and offer this model for free to the local societies.

Proposed Programs/Projects—New Hampshire Preservation Alliance
Based on the surveys and town hall meetings, the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance will focus on the following proposed programs/projects:

- Through its field service program, continue to provide professional assistance to help local societies become more effective stewards of their historic buildings.
- Help local societies serve as a catalyst for other preservation activities in their communities, such as establishing or strengthening heritage commissions.
- Offer information on alternative models for stewardship of historic buildings: e.g., historic preservation easement, resident curatorship, co-stewardship, etc.
- Collaborate with the New Hampshire Historical Society on a "CAP-lite" (i.e., "conservation assessment program"-lite) where the Alliance evaluates building care issues (e.g., water infiltration, mold, structural failure, etc.) and the Society evaluates collections care issues in a manner that is much simpler, more practical, and less intimidating than the CAP sponsored by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Proposed Programs/Projects—New Hampshire Humanities Council
The New Hampshire Humanities Council will focus on the following proposed programs/projects:

- Continue to offer the extremely popular "Humanities To Go!" roster of lecturers, book discussion leaders, living history presenters, and audio-visual programs on New Hampshire history and other subjects.
- Offer grant workshops for local historical societies to educate volunteer leaders on applying to the Humanities Council for grants.

- Support content workshops that would provide training on how to conduct programs such as cemetery walks, oral histories, and using material culture.
- Consider developing "civic reflection" community conversations on such topics as local land use and preservation policies that could be offered by local historical societies. This would enable local societies to offer programming relevant to the current concerns of their communities.

Proposed Programs/Projects—Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire
Based on the surveys and town hall meetings, the Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire will focus on the following proposed programs/projects:

- Continue its newsletter (The Associate), e-newsletter (E-ssociate), and *Directory of Historical Societies of New Hampshire and Other Historical Resources.*
- Add more content to the Association's Web site, such as links to grant sources.
- Streamline communications with local societies, starting by gathering a thorough list of e-mails of the "go to" people at each society.
- Promote more and better networking opportunities through regional roundtables of neighboring historical organizations based on the model of the Monadnock Historical Societies Forum run by the Historical Society of Cheshire County.
- Collaborate with the Society, Alliance, and Council on a regular schedule of technical and content workshops to be held around the state so that local societies can anticipate and plan for these training opportunities.
- Explore the feasibility of creating recognition programs, such as an awards and/or certification program (e.g., self-evaluation checklist) to promote and celebrate simple "best practices."

Conclusion
This report largely concludes our formal research on local historical societies. There is one analysis remaining: We have obtained the Forms 990 to the IRS and/or the annual reports to the New Hampshire Register of Charitable Trusts for every local society with the intention of studying their overall financial health as a group. We do not expect that this financial analysis will alter our conclusions as to the programs we intend to offer local societies.

The next phase of our initiative will be for the supporting organizations to perform the due diligence needed to create implementation plans, project budgets, performance measurements, and funding plans for their proposed programs to support local historical societies. In the short run, we are confident that enhanced services and statewide presence will increase the membership and financial stability of the local societies as well as the supporting organizations. But, we also believe that this process of discernment will help to knock down barriers in all regions, build camaraderie, and create a sense of shared purpose.