



StEPs-CT:

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is StEPs-CT?

A: StEPs-CT is an integrated program of professional development, facilitated conversation, mentorship, and competitive grant funding for smaller cultural organizations. StEPs-CT is a program of Connecticut Humanities (CTH) and the Connecticut League of History Organizations (CLHO) in partnership with the Connecticut Historical Society based upon a curriculum of best practices developed by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) called StEPs.

Q: What does StEPs stand for?

A: StEPs is an acronym for "Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations." Since its debut in 2009, StEPs has helped nearly 900 institutions nationwide, including 51 in Connecticut, begin taking "steps" to plan for positive change.

Q: What topics does StEPs-CT cover?

A: StEPs-CT aligns with the national curriculum created by AASLH. The six standards units covered over the course of three years are: Mission, Vision, & Governance; Audience; Management; Stewardship of Collections; Stewardship of Historic Structures & Landscapes; and Interpretation.

Q: Who is StEPs-CT for?

A: StEPs-CT is designed for smaller Connecticut museums, historical societies and other cultural organizations that are interested, willing and committed to strengthening their organizations.

Q: How do you define smaller?

A: Specifically, the program is designed to support organizations with an operating budget of \$150,000 or smaller.

Q: Our organization is slightly bigger than that, can we apply?

A: If you can articulate a case for your participation, your application will be considered.

Q: Can any organization sign up for the program?

A: Program participants are chosen through a competitive application process. The application is designed to be easy to access and complete. Applications are due by November 17, 2017.

Q: Is my institution eligible?

A: Participating organizations must be Connecticut-based, 501(c)3 non-profits or municipal-run organizations, and provide significant programming and/or services to the public on a regular basis and have at least one paid staff member (full- or part-time) or dedicated volunteer equivalent with a formalized job description.

Q: What are the benefits to participating in StEPs-CT?

A: Benefits include (per unit):

- ❖ 2 full days of training in museum best practices, led by highly qualified museum professionals
- ❖ 2 facilitated “open house” half-day programs to address issues specific to your organization
- ❖ 1 half day workshop sessions designed to augment each unit’s curriculum
- ❖ Access to a dedicated StEPs-CT mentor during designated training days and up to an additional 6 hours of consult time per unit
- ❖ Exclusive access to a CTH competitive grant fund for a project related to achieving StEPs program standards (pending funding availability)
- ❖ StEPs certificates sent from AASLH to recognize your organization’s progress through the program

Q: How much does it cost to participate?

A: The StEPs-CT program is designed to be affordable:

- ❖ \$175 for a one-time enrollment fee in the national StEPs program (includes cost of the program workbook and access to national, online StEPs community).
- ❖ Organizations must also maintain an institutional membership to the CLHO and AASLH for the duration of the program.
- ❖ Program fees to allow an unlimited number of organizational participants to take part in all activities (unit fees paid at the beginning of each unit):
 - \$200 per unit for First Time Participants wanting to complete all six StEPs units between 2018-2020 (Total amount paid over three years = \$1,200)
 - \$300 per unit for First Time Participants wanting to complete three StEPs units only (Mission, Vision, & Governance; Audience; and Management. Total amount paid over eighteen months = \$900)
 - \$150 per unit for Returning StEPs-CT Organizations wanting to participate in one StEPs unit only.

Q: How many people from my organization can participate?

A: Accepted organizations are allowed an unlimited number of participants.

Q: What do organizations commit to by participating in StEPs-CT?

A: Organizations commit to:

- ❖ Achieving Bronze Level StEPs Certificates (or higher) for each standards unit covered
- ❖ Attend the following StEPs-CT program-related activities for EACH standards unit:
 - Unit intro session (1 day)
 - Unit workshop (1 day)
 - Unit open house sessions (must attend at least 1 of 2 open house half days)
 - Unit wrap-up session (1 half-day)

- ❖ Designate a dedicated representative who will remain the primary contact throughout the course of the entire StEPs-CT program.

Note: Two people from each organization must attend all sessions for each StEPs standards unit.

- Q: Will all institutions commit to the entire three-year program?
- A: Not necessarily. Some organizations may elect to do the first three curriculum units only. Previous StEPs-CT organizations may elect to come back to do single units only.
- Q: How many organizations will be accepted in StEPs-CT? How many mentors will be affiliated with the program?
- A: We hope to accept up to 10 organizations into the StEPs-CT program for 2018-20. We plan to include 2 program mentors per unit who will each work with up to 5 participating organizations.
- Q: Who are the mentors and who will be doing the training?
- A: StEPs-CT mentors have been chosen from the Connecticut heritage community based on their experience working with small organizations on a broad variety of topics. The training sessions will be led by StEPs-CT program staff and occasionally, invited guest subject area specialists. Material that is presented during the training sessions has been created by AASLH and modified and augmented to address the needs of the StEPs-CT participants.
- Q: Does StEPs-CT work?
- A: This will be the third offering of the StEPs-CT program. From 2012-17, 47 organizations completed the program, transforming their organizations in the process. To date, these organizations have earned over 150 StEPs certificates (one third of StEPs certificates earned nationwide) and received over \$175,000 in grants from Connecticut Humanities. Participant testimonials include:
- “StEPs-CT encourages all of us who participate to strive for higher standards in our organizations’ operations and to increase services to our audiences.”
- “I was delighted and honored that our organization was accepted to participate in StEPs-CT... It’s a tremendous opportunity for our organization to grow.” — Dick Pacholski, President, Harwinton Historical Society
- “The first two sessions of this program helped me to gain insight into the Board of Director’s responsibilities for managing our Historical Society and for creating a Strategic Plan of operations.” — Richard Lindsey, Treasurer, Kent Historical Society
- “This is a great opportunity for our institution to work on meeting national standards in the museum field so that we may better serve our community.” — Mark McEachern, Torrington Historical Society
- “We at the Warren Historical Society are excited about the opportunity the StEPs program gives us to revitalize our organization and enhance our programming and community outreach.” — Rebecca Neary, Vice President, Warren Historical Society