



**StEPs-CT:
Frequently Asked Questions**

Q: What is StEPs-CT?

A: StEPs-CT is a 26-month 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 585 institutions nationwide, including 27 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 sections covered over the course of two years are: Mission, Vision, & Governance; Audience; and Management (yr. 1) and Stewardship of Collections; Stewardship of Historic Structures & Landscapes; and Interpretation (yr. 2).

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, 2014.

Q: Is my institution eligible?

A: Participating organizations must be Connecticut-based, 501(c)3 non-profits 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:

- ❖ 12 full days of training in museum best practices, led by highly qualified museum professionals
- ❖ 12 facilitated “open house” half-day programs to address issues specific to your organization
- ❖ 6 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.
- ❖ StEPs certificates sent from AASLH to recognize your organization’s progress through the program

Q: How much does it cost to participate?

A: The 26-month StEPs-CT program is designed to be affordable:

- ❖ \$600 in program fees over the course of the entire program (covers two organizational participants to take part in all activities; \$100 paid at the beginning of each unit).
- ❖ \$150 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.

Q: How many people from my organization can participate?

A: Accepted organizations are allowed two representatives per StEPs Standards Section. Organizations are always encouraged to bring additional representatives to Open House sessions at no cost. Additional representatives may participate in program workshop sessions for a discounted fee (20% off).

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 section.
- ❖ Attend the following StEPs-CT program-related activities for EACH standards section:
 - Section intro session (1 day)
 - Section workshop (1 day)
 - Section open house sessions (2 days)
 - Section 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 section. Organizations may change their representatives for each of the six standards sections.

- Q: Will all institutions commit to the two-year program?
- A: Not necessarily. Organizations must successfully complete the first year before qualifying for the second year of training. It is our hope that all organizations will take advantage of the program's Year II training.
- 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 25 organizations into the StEPs-CT program for 2015-17. We plan to include 5 program mentors who will each work with up to 5 participating organizations each. Mentors commit to working with the same organizations throughout the entire twenty-six month program.
- 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 second offering of the StEPs-CT program. From 2012-14, 24 organizations completed the program, transforming their organizations in the process. To date, these organizations have earned a total of 116 StEPs certificates and received over \$45,000 in grants. 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
- “IAIS is pleased to be included in the StEPS-CT program and will use the opportunity to strengthen the Museum’s voice; bringing the culture and traditions of Native Americans to the community.” — Lynn Wellings, Trustee, Institute for American Indian Studies, Washington
- “I have found this program to be a great beginning and a way to rethink what we have been doing - both how to do it better and what we have done that is valid and how to use information more productively.”