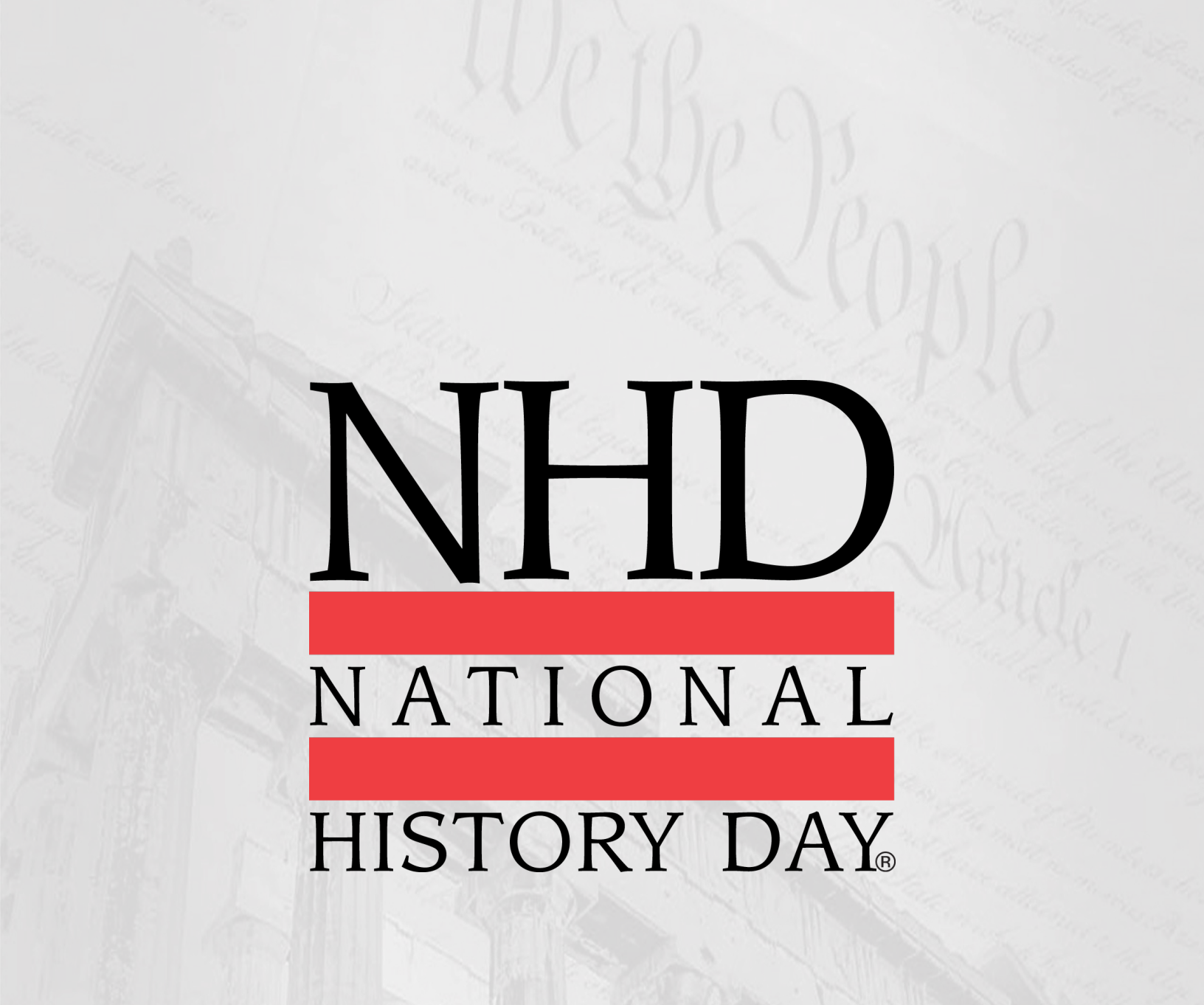
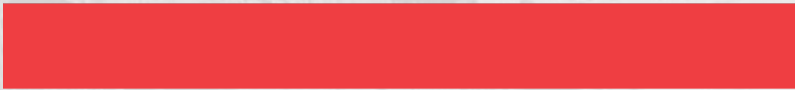




NHD



NATIONAL



HISTORY DAY[®]

Executive Director

Position Profile | July 2026



Content Summary

- 3 | About National History Day
- 5 | The Opportunity
- 9 | Staff
- 10 | Board of Trustees & Advisory Council
- 11 | The DC Region
- 13 | Process of Candidacy

About National History Day

National History Day (NHD) stands at the forefront of history and civics education, inspiring curiosity, critical thinking, and civic engagement in students and educators around the world. Since its founding in 1974, the organization has grown into a nationally recognized educational institution that reaches more than half a million students and tens of thousands of teachers each year through its signature academic competition, educator professional development programs, curriculum resources, and experiential learning opportunities.

For more than five decades, NHD has empowered young people to become thoughtful researchers, confident communicators, and engaged citizens by bringing history to life through inquiry-driven learning. Its impact extends far beyond the classroom, shaping generations of students through experiences that cultivate intellectual rigor, creativity, empathy, and leadership.

NHD's educational model is designed to strengthen historical thinking, research, writing, communication, and critical analysis skills while helping students develop confidence and intellectual curiosity. The organization's work has become increasingly relevant in today's educational and civic landscape, where the ability to evaluate information, understand context, and engage thoughtfully with complex issues has never been more important. Independent research conducted on NHD participants has demonstrated measurable gains in college- and career-ready competencies, including stronger writing skills and improved argumentation.

Headquartered in College Park, Maryland, NHD supports a broad affiliate network spanning all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, and international programs. In addition to its student competition, the organization delivers professional development opportunities for educators, teacher institutes, webinars, curriculum resources, and collaborative partnerships with libraries, museums, archives, and cultural institutions.



NHD has received national recognition for its contributions to education and public humanities, including the prestigious ***National Humanities Medal*** awarded by President Barack Obama.

As NHD looks toward its next chapter, the organization is uniquely positioned to expand its national influence, deepen its educational impact, and continue teaching future generations how to research, analyze and present their results.

About National History Day

Impact at a Glance

Since its inception, NHD has inspired students to become thoughtful researchers, effective communicators, and engaged citizens. Independent evaluations have demonstrated that National History Day's inquiry-based model strengthens academic achievement, historical thinking and communication skills. The impact extends well beyond history education, helping students develop skills that support lifelong learning and leadership.

By The Numbers:

500,000+
STUDENTS PARTICIPATING
ANNUALLY

58
AFFILIATES (50 STATES, D.C.,
TERRITORIES & INTERNATIONAL
PROGRAMS)

~3,000
STUDENTS AT THE
NATIONAL CONTEST

8M+
STUDENT ALUMNI SINCE
FOUNDING



Stronger Academic Performance

- NHD participants outperform peers on state assessments across multiple subject areas

Stronger Writing & Research Skills

- NHD participants demonstrate measurable gains in research methodology, evidence evaluation, analytical writing and argument development

College & Career Readiness

- NHD participants report growth in critical thinking, public speaking, project management, collaboration, and time management

Inquiry-Based Learning

- NHD participants learn to analyze primary and secondary sources, evaluate evidence, understand historical context, construct evidence-based arguments, and communicate complex ideas effectively

Sources: NHD website, National Contest materials, and NHD program evaluation research.

The Opportunity



Overview

National History Day enters this leadership transition from a position of strength. Over the past several decades, the organization has established a highly respected national brand, built a broad affiliate network, expanded its educational programming, strengthened its financial position, and created a lasting impact on generations of students and educators.

With Cathy Gorn's planned retirement following more than four decades of dedicated service and visionary leadership, NHD has an opportunity to define its next chapter. The Board seeks a leader who will honor the organization's mission and legacy while positioning NHD for its next era of growth and impact.

The next Executive Director will lead a nationally recognized organization at a pivotal moment in its evolution. Key opportunities include expanding philanthropic support, strengthening NHD's visibility and influence, and deepening engagement with alumni, partners, and supporters. The next leader will also have the opportunity to thoughtfully adapt its communications, digital presence, and partnership strategies to meet the expectations of today's rapidly evolving educational and cultural landscape.

As NHD's chief storyteller, fundraiser, ambassador, and strategic leader, the Executive Director will cultivate relationships with donors, educators, affiliates, institutional partners, volunteers, and alumni to advance the organization's mission and long-term vision. Success will require balancing stewardship and innovation: preserving the rigor, inquiry, and student-centered values that define NHD while pursuing new opportunities to strengthen the organization's reach and impact.

As NHD looks to the future, the next Executive Director will build upon the organization's strong foundation by expanding its national influence, strengthening engagement across its network, and ensuring that NHD continues to inspire students, educators, and supporters for generations to come.

The Opportunity

Key Priorities & Responsibilities

Financial Stewardship & Revenue Generation

- Diversify and strengthen revenue streams across philanthropy, foundations, corporations, grants, and individual giving
- Cultivate and steward major donors and strategic funding partners
- Expand long-term financial capacity, including endowment growth and reserve strengthening
- Build scalable fundraising systems and donor engagement strategies
- Position NHD for sustained investment in educational programs, affiliate support, organizational capacity, and strategic growth initiatives



Brand Visibility, Growth & Strategic Positioning

- Strengthen and steward the NHD brand across a diverse affiliate network, balancing national consistency with local relevance
- Increase awareness, participation, and engagement among educators, donors, policymakers, and the public
- Elevate NHD's position as a leading national voice in history education and inquiry-based learning
- Leverage alumni, partnerships, and strategic partners to accelerate growth and influence
- Identify opportunities to expand the organization's impact and relevance



Academic Rigor & Mission Stewardship

- Protect and strengthen the academic rigor and integrity of the program
- Champion historical inquiry, research, and evidence-based learning
- Advance NHD's role as a national leader and advocate for history education, historical inquiry, and civic learning
- Support teacher engagement, professional development, and classroom implementation
- Strengthen support for teachers as the primary drivers of student participation and program impact



The Opportunity

Key Priorities & Responsibilities, continued

Stakeholder Engagement & Partnerships

- Build trust and alignment across a broad range of stakeholders, including students, educators, donors, volunteers, affiliates, staff, board members, and institutional partners
- Serve as a visible, accessible, and inspiring ambassador for the organization
- Lead through influence, collaboration, political savvy, and a shared commitment to mission
- Cultivate strategic partnerships that advance mission impact, visibility, and long-term sustainability



Innovation, Relevance & Future Readiness

- Encourage innovation across programs, operations, and stakeholder engagement
- Monitor emerging trends and opportunities shaping the future of education and civic learning
- Expand access and participation to ensure NHD reaches an increasingly broad and diverse population of students and educators
- Promote a broad range of historical perspectives and experiences
- Ensure the organization remains responsive, relevant, and mission-focused for future generations



Organizational Leadership & Team Development

- Partner effectively with the Board of Trustees and Advisory Council
- Promote organizational rigor through consistent reporting, meaningful metrics, and data-informed decision making
- Empower and develop a high-performing, mission-driven team
- Foster a culture of transparency, trust, collaboration, and accountability
- Honor and preserve institutional knowledge while positioning the organization for continued evolution and growth



The Opportunity

Desired Experience

- **Strategic Leadership & Organizational Growth** – *Leading complex mission-driven organizations through growth, strategic transformation, organizational evolution, and long-term planning*
- **Fundraising & Revenue Development** – *Securing and growing diverse revenue streams, including major gifts, foundation support, corporate partnerships, grants, and other philanthropic investments that advance organizational sustainability and impact*
- **Education, Mission & Public Engagement** – *Advancing educational, cultural, civic, or public-serving missions through stakeholder engagement, programmatic excellence, thought leadership, and effective public advocacy*
- **Partnership & Network Leadership** – *Building and sustaining strategic relationships across diverse stakeholder groups while leading through influence within affiliate, chapter, volunteer, partnership, or other distributed organizational models*
- **Governance & Team Leadership** – *Partnering effectively with boards and volunteer leaders while recruiting, developing, and empowering high-performing teams and organizational cultures, and utilizing data-informed decision making to strengthen organizational effectiveness and impact*



Desired Attributes

- **Committed to History Education as Impactful** – *Demonstrates a genuine appreciation for history education, inquiry-based learning, and the transformative impact NHD has on students and educators*
- **Relationship-Centered Leader** – *Builds authentic, trusted relationships and fosters alignment across diverse stakeholders, including staff, affiliates, educators, donors, volunteers, and institutional partners*
- **Exceptional Communicator & Ambassador** – *Connects naturally with a wide range of audiences and effectively represents the organization with credibility, authenticity, and influence*
- **Strategic & Growth-Oriented** – *Balances stewardship of a successful organization with the vision, curiosity, and courage to pursue new opportunities for growth, relevance, and impact*
- **Emotionally Intelligent & Collaborative** – *Leads with empathy, humility, sound judgment, and a collaborative approach that values diverse perspectives and empowers others*
- **Adaptable & Forward-Looking** – *Understands the evolving educational landscape and is prepared to guide NHD through emerging technologies, changing learning environments, future challenges and opportunities*



Staff



Cathy Gorn, Ph.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Krista Grensavitch, Ph.D.
LEAD HISTORIAN



Kim Fortney
DEPUTY DIRECTOR



Jamie Holifield
PROGRAM MANAGER



Lynne O'Hara
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMS



Sharon Gillette
PROGRAM MANAGER



Lorena Torres
FINANCE DIRECTOR



Armani Wall
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT



Alaina McNaughton
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF CONTEST



Mary Walsh
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER



Erikka Washington
OFFICE & EVENTS MANAGER



Johana Mata
NATIONAL CONTEST COORDINATOR

Board of Trustees & Advisory Council

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of NHD, providing strategic oversight for the organization.

Celie Niehaus, PRESIDENT

Former Chief Compliance Officer, USAA

Sarah Aschbrenner

NHD Co-Coordinator, Minnesota Historical Society

David Behring

President, Wheelchair Foundation

**Courtney Chapin, VICE PRESIDENT & CO-CHAIR,
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Former Executive Director, The Better Angels Society

Noralee Frankel, SECRETARY

Independent Scholar and Historian

Jon Gillum

Counsel, Troutman Pepper Locke

Steven Goldberg, TREASURER

Group Founder & Financial Planner, Capital Wealth Management, LLC

Timothy Hughes

Associate General Counsel and SVP, Bank of America

Cosby Hunt

History Teacher, Richard Wright Public Charter School for Journalism & Media Arts

Richard Kurin

Distinguished Scholar and Ambassador-at-Large, Smithsonian Institution

Ted Prasse

Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP

Sherry Rollo

Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP

Renee Romano, CHAIR, GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Principal and Co-Founder, Romano & Min Projects

Hannah Tofte

NHD Coordinator, Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

**Donald Wildman, CO-CHAIR, DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE**

The Advisory Council, comprised of representatives from partner organizations and agencies, advises the Board of Trustees and the national staff on issues of programming and helps to connect NHD with other national organizations.

Beth Boland

Joanna Capps

National Archives Foundation

Michelle Anne Delaney

Smithsonian Institution

Noralee Frankel, CHAIR

Brendan Gillis

American Historical Association

Daniel Goldmark

Case Western Reserve University

Julian Hipkins, III

Theodore Roosevelt High School

Hayley Johnson

Louisiana State University

Katarina Keane

University of Maryland

Elisabeth M. Marsh

Organization of American Historians

Kelly McFarland Stratman

National Council for the Social Studies

Lee Ann Potter

Library of Congress

Phoebe Stein

Federation of State Humanities Councils

K. Allison Wickens

Mount Vernon, AASLH

The DC Metro



6.4M

METRO AREA
RESIDENTS

6th

LARGEST METRO AREA
IN THE U.S.

1.4%

POPULATION GROWTH
SINCE 2023

Connected Communities

While the Washington, D.C. region is one of the nation's most dynamic metropolitan areas, residents benefit from a broad range of living environments across the District, Maryland, and Northern Virginia. From walkable urban neighborhoods and historic rowhouse communities to suburban town centers and waterfront developments, the DMV offers diverse lifestyle options supported by extensive public transit, regional airports, and commuter connectivity.

Education & Research Excellence

The DMV is home to one of the country's most highly educated populations, supported by nationally recognized institutions including Georgetown University, George Washington University, Howard University, American University, the University of Maryland, and George Mason University. The region's concentration of universities, research centers, federal agencies, and think tanks creates a strong pipeline of talent and innovation across public policy, healthcare, technology, and the sciences.

Culture, Arts & Global Influence

The Washington metropolitan region offers an unmatched blend of history, culture, and international influence. Residents enjoy access to world-renowned museums and cultural institutions including the Smithsonian museums, Kennedy Center, National Gallery of Art, and Library of Congress, alongside thriving local arts districts, music venues, and culinary destinations. The region is also home to professional sports franchises, expansive park systems, and vibrant neighborhoods that reflect the area's global diversity.

The DC Metro



Innovation, Government & Industry Leadership

As the nation's capital region, the DMV serves as a global center for government, policy, defense, cybersecurity, healthcare, education, and emerging technology. The region's economy is anchored by federal agencies, Fortune 500 companies, nonprofit organizations, and rapidly growing innovation corridors in Northern Virginia and suburban Maryland. This concentration of leadership and cross-sector collaboration creates exceptional opportunities for professional growth, partnership, and civic impact.

Relocating to the DMV

Whether seeking the energy of downtown D.C., the charm of Northern Virginia communities, or the accessibility of suburban Maryland, the Washington metropolitan region offers a wide range of residential and lifestyle options. Residents benefit from strong transportation infrastructure, international airports, extensive cultural amenities, and proximity to major East Coast destinations, making the DMV one of the country's most connected and influential regions.



Process of Candidacy

National History Day is committed to a strict policy of equal employment opportunity (EEO) and nondiscrimination. Employment and program participation are offered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

Process Of Candidacy

BeecherHill is pleased to partner with National History Day on this important search. We welcome nominations, referrals, and applications. Please submit resumes, letters of interest, and preferred contact information by **Friday, August 14** to NHDExecutiveDirector@beecherhillsearch.com

BeecherHill

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Phone: 614.939.4240

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