

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Building Momentum for 2026



LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS



Michael B. Coleman and Douglas J. Preisse
Co-Chairs

“We want to bring people together under the umbrella of this shared sense of pride in Ohio.”

Dear Governor DeWine, Lt. Governor Husted, Senate President Huffman, and Speaker Stephens:

The theme for this 2023 annual report is “Building Momentum.” The scientific meaning of momentum describes the motion that an object has based on how big it is (mass) and how fast it is going (velocity). In the case of America 250-Ohio, we see building momentum as harnessing the growing energy and enthusiasm (mass) around the upcoming 250th anniversary of the U.S., as more steps (velocity) are being taken to prepare for Ohio’s celebration of this once-in-a-generation event.

During 2023, we increased the capacity and resources for the commission by adding three staff members to help carry out the work. We were allocated a collective \$5 million for the FY ‘24-25 biennium from the Ohio General Assembly, where 50% will be awarded across the state in the form of grants. These will help ensure that there will be community-level events and experiences.

The commission hammered out a strategic plan including an exciting set of themes that will be developed and carried out over the next three years. Themes that support the big idea of how Ohio has impacted the U.S. (and the world) for the past 250+ years. Without Ohio and its people, quite literally the world would be a different place. We’re going to help Ohioans see themselves through a lens of contributions that Ohio has made and is still making that make a tangible difference in their lives and the lives of others. We want to bring people together under the umbrella of this shared sense of pride in Ohio.

As we reported in our “Recommendations to the People of Ohio” letter a year ago, we see America 250-Ohio as an opportunity for national unity and respect, and we see Ohio as leading the way in that effort.

When you read this report and see our accomplishments from 2023, we think you will agree that we are indeed building momentum! We’ll be highlighting several areas of accomplishments including:

- **Building** public awareness through a significant billboard campaign early in 2023 to new social media channels and a very recently released website.
- **Developing** of a robust outreach strategy that included numerous conference sessions led by commission staff to reach as many people as possible.
- **Initiating** the commission’s first round of grants in October 2023, with a second round to begin in January 2024.
- **Engaging** communities with the launch of the America 250-Ohio Communities program.

And that’s not all, not by a long shot— we have our first painted barn on U.S. Route 250 and moved into new office space in the Huntington Center.

If you aren’t involved already, we invite you to join us on the journey as we prepare to celebrate and commemorate the U.S. 250th anniversary – **“Ohio-style.”**

Sincerely,

Michael B. Coleman, Co-Chair
Ohio Commission for the
U.S. Semiquincentennial

Douglas J. Preisse, Co-Chair
Ohio Commission for the
U.S. Semiquincentennial



BUILDING MOMENTUM THROUGH CLARITY OF PURPOSE

2023 was a critical year to build the infrastructure and foundation for the work ahead which included completing a strategic plan and clarifying the approach to the work. We now can build on that platform to scale up to create programs and experiences to fulfill the mission of America 250-Ohio.

MISSION/CHARGE:

“...to plan, encourage, develop, and coordinate the commemoration of the two hundred fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United States and the impact of Ohioans on the nation’s past, present, and future.” —Ohio Revised Code (149.309)

Vision: Raise awareness, instill pride, and lead strategic direction to showcase Ohio’s contributions to the U.S. for 250+ years.

Primary Purpose: To create meaningful engagement in all 88 Ohio counties by highlighting how Ohio and Ohioans have influenced American history and continue to shape the future.

OUR APPROACH:

Grassroots and Local Involvement: We’re going to involve all 88 counties to create a statewide celebration and commemoration that is bold, inclusive, educational, and fun. We have seen great momentum in this area with the introduction of the America 250-Ohio Communities program, where we have already signed up counties in every region to be an official America 250-Ohio community.

Multi-Year Celebration: While 2026 will be the pinnacle of the celebration, we aren’t waiting until then to begin the celebration. Already in 2023, we took steps to engage Ohioans with appearances and events, with many more planned for 2024 and beyond.

Ohio Focused: Celebrating Ohio Firsts and Originals - We’ll tell the stories of the many Ohio firsts, like the invention of the airplane to the first person to walk on the moon; to the sacred stories of the Native Americans who were here for thousands of years before Europeans; to the unique regions of the state and amazing natural resources.



America 250-Ohio

An ideal opportunity to amplify the stories of Ohio’s contributions to the U.S. for the past 250+ years.



Orville and Wilbur Wright, Inventors, Dayton, Ohio



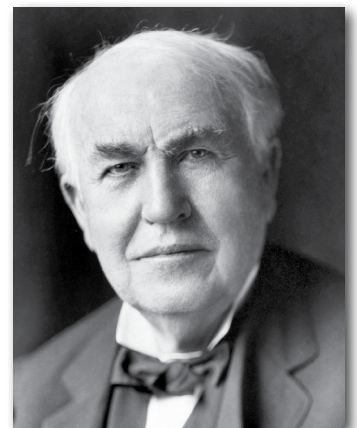
Toni Morrison, Author, Lorain, Ohio



Tecumseh, Shawnee Chief



Neil Armstrong, Astronaut, Wapakoneta, Ohio



Thomas Edison, Inventor, Milan, Ohio

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Our foundational document is section 149.309 in the Ohio Revised Code. In that document, we have key goals and deliverables that are guiding our work. In 2023, we have kept these firmly in mind as we build out our programs.

Engagement - build public awareness and foster public participation.



30 speeches and presentations



10 public appearance events



250 Ohio's Favorites social media campaign launched October 2023.



3 Social media channels established spring 2023.



Outdoor Advertising Association of Ohio

Excellence in Outdoor, Excellence in Community

Billboard campaign – generated 75 million impressions for an advertising value of \$500,000 – March 2023. Advertising provided courtesy of the Outdoor Advertising Association of Ohio.

400,000 MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

Selected and hired Fahlgren Mortine as **public relations/earned media partner** - September 2023, generating over 400,000 media impressions to-date.

Coordinate with all levels of government and private organizations to include infrastructural improvements and projects or programs to welcome and encourage regional, national, and international tourists.



Formed a partnership with Outdoor Pursuits to hold the **2026 Great Ohio Bicycle Adventure** to align with U.S. Route 250.



130 key partnership meetings in more than 20 communities.



New website launched

on 10/5/23 with 5,600 site visits to america250-ohio.org to date.


5,600
SITE VISITS
TO DATE

Statewide effort - involve and showcase all 88 counties.

Serving as a hub to connect people, communities, and organizations to create celebrations and commemorations unique to their location.



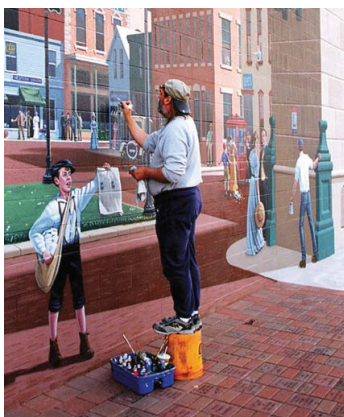
Formed a strategic partnership with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) to recognize Revolutionary War veterans' graves.



Launched America 250-Ohio Communities in partnership with the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, 7 counties have signed up to date.

Comprehensive content and storytelling -

draw attention to the achievements, struggles, honors, innovations, and significance of all people in Ohio from before its founding to the present day.



Formed the under-told stories committee which will be led by Kathy Dean-Dielman (commissioner) and Frances McGee Cromartie (DAR).

Serve as a resource - providing resources such as grants, expertise, and promotional materials.



Launched grants program with 75 applicants for the first round (October 2023).

Created promotional materials being distributed through partners including souvenir lapel pins, rack cards, pens, stickers, etc.

STRATEGIC PLAN “AT A GLANCE”



America 250-Ohio initiatives will tell the stories of Ohio

Themes for Celebrations and Commemorations:

- Celebrations and Signature Events
- Ohio Originals – Highlighting Ohio firsts, points of pride and unity
- Engaging Youth and Lifelong Learners – Developing educational touchpoints
- Inclusive Statewide Engagement – History, arts, culture, museums, and people
- Telling Ohio’s Stories – Highlighting under-told stories

Through America 250-Ohio projects, we will reflect on the past, celebrate the present and build for the future.

Past

Heritage
Reflection
Preservation

Present

Interpretation
Celebration
Commemoration

Future

Education
Building for the next
generation

We will use these strategic building blocks to organize initiatives and projects:

- 88 county engagement and support
- Statewide signature events and programs
- Public awareness strategy
- Programs and projects produced with partners
- Grants program to distribute funds for projects and community-led initiatives
- Tourism, industry, stakeholder, and community events
- Education

THREE PROJECT LEVELS

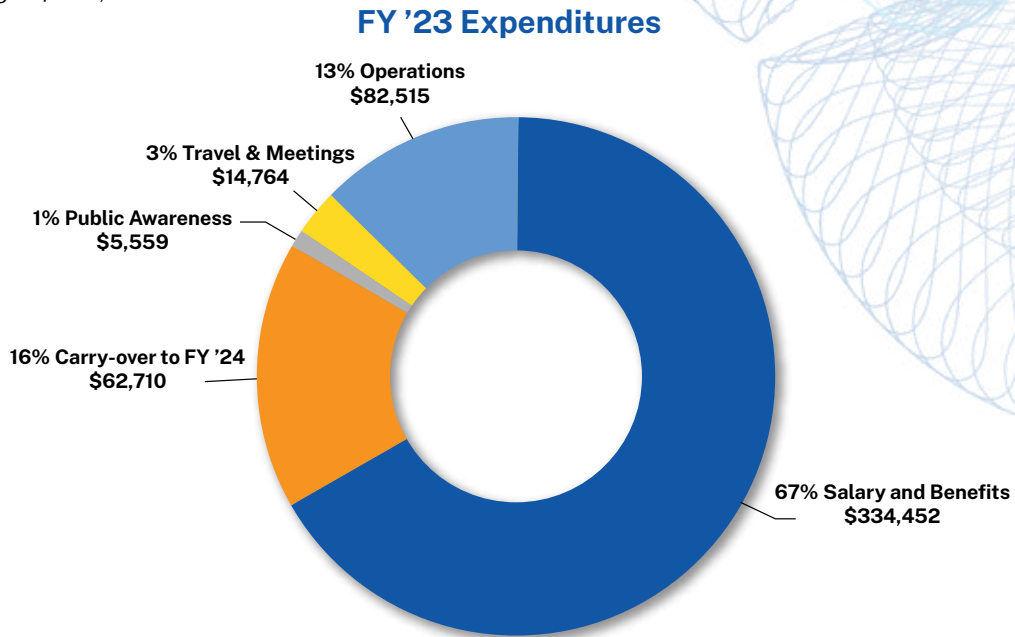


For the fiscal year 2023 (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023). We operated with a \$500,000 budget.

A carry-over amount of \$62,710 will be utilized in FY '24. The carry-over was approved by the Commission as well as by Ohio History Connection which serves as the fiscal agent for America 250-Ohio.

FY '23 Expenditures

FY '23 Budget \$500,000

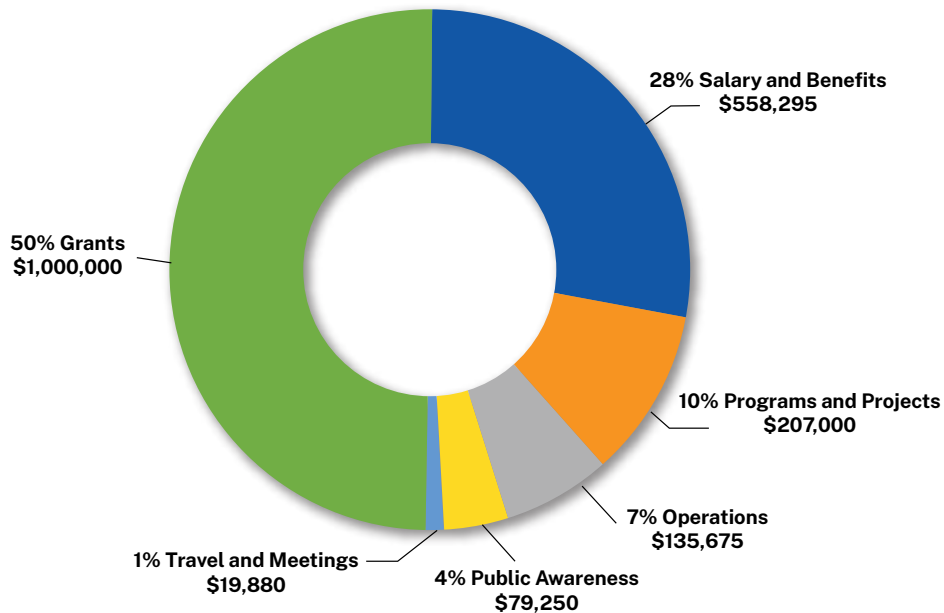


Biennial FY '24-25 Budget

We will be wise stewards of the funds provided by the Ohio General Assembly for FY '24-25, as well as engage in private fundraising to provide additional resources.

FY '24 Budget \$2,000,000

FY '24 Budget - Planned Expenditures \$2,000,000



FY '25 Budget allocation: \$3,000,000. It is anticipated that allocation percentages will be similar to FY'24.

WHAT IS IN STORE FOR '24 (AND BEYOND)

We have some ambitious goals to celebrate a big anniversary! Here are the highlights of projects that we will undertake between 2024-2026:



OUR PLANS FOR 2024 – 2026

250

- Ohio's Favorite Things – social media campaign
- Revolutionary War veterans' graves recognized
- Trees planted
- Official America 250-Ohio communities
- U.S. Route 250 heritage trail

88
Counties

- Locally planned and implemented activities and events
- Next Gen Citizens program for youth engagement
- Ohio Story Hub including under-told stories
- Ohio Goes to the Movies – statewide film festival
- 4th Grade History Pass
- Ohio Statewide Picnic & Homecoming
- K-12 supplemental education materials

12

- Months of themed experiences in 2026
- New statewide tourism “trails and tales”
- Works of public art such as barn and urban murals

WHAT IS IN STORE FOR '24 (AND BEYOND)

In 2024 we plan to launch many new initiatives as well as keep the momentum building for the programs started in 2023. Here are some highlights:



4th Grade History Pass – A program to provide every fourth grader in Ohio with a free admission to participating history museums throughout the state.



Grant funding applications due March 1, 2024.



Next Gen Citizen (pilot) – A program to inspire youth ages 8+ to explore their local community to discover what makes Ohio unique and to learn more about themselves as budding citizens.



Under-Told Stories/Ohio Story Hub – In partnership with the Ohio Channel and others we will begin collecting and sharing stories of Ohioans that are often under-told.

January 2024

February 2024

March 2024

April 2024

May 2024

June - August 2024

September 2024

November 2024



Second round of grant funding applications available beginning January 16, 2024.



First of three statewide “trails and tales” to be launched. Themes will include: Aviation and Space; Ohio Leaders; and Ohio Creates.



Public art: barn murals continue – We'll partner with barn artist, Scott Hagan to paint 2-3 more of these beloved expressions of Ohio pride.



Revolutionary War veterans grave markers program – We'll begin the recognition process of some of the Revolutionary War veterans who are buried in Ohio, in alignment with Veterans Day 2024.

BUILDING MOMENTUM THROUGH TEAMWORK

It might sound like a cliché that “teamwork makes the dream work,” but in the case of preparing for Ohio’s celebration of the U.S. 250th anniversary in 2026, it is a truism.

The “team” in this case is quite large, made up of volunteers serving on the commission, committees, workgroups, all who are working together to leverage the efforts of the staff to build out the plans that will make the “dream” of Ohio’s celebration of the semiquincentennial come true.

THE COMMISSION

The 29-person commission was formed through the OH. Rev. Code § 149.309 and announced on March 1, 2022, on Ohio’s Statehood Day by Governor Mike DeWine.

Co-Chairs: **Michael B. Coleman** & **Douglas J. Preisse**

Commission Members

State Sen. Hearcel Craig, Ohio Senate
Christy Davis, immediate past president of the Ohio Local History Alliance, and curator of exhibitions of the Canton Museum of Art

Kathryn Dean-Dielman, board president of the Lorain County Historical Society

Kelly Falcone-Hall, executive director of the Western Reserve Historical Society

John Fleming, Ph.D., museum professional

Steve Hambley, Ph.D., Medina County commissioner

Thomas Hankins, chapter president of the Sons of the American Revolution: Hocking Valley Chapter, and member of the Friends of Fort Laurens

Nancy Putnam Hollister, former governor, lieutenant governor, and legislator

State Rep. Adam Holmes, Ohio House of Representatives

Melinda Huntley, executive director of the Ohio Travel Association

Vincent Keeran, clerk of the Ohio Senate

Chief Justice Sharon L. Kennedy,

Supreme Court of Ohio

Megan Kvamme, Muskingum County entrepreneur

State Sen. George Lang, Ohio Senate

Adam Levine, director of the Toledo Museum of Art

Glenn Miller, Henry County commissioner, and president of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio

State Rep. Joe Miller, Ohio House of Representatives

Charley Moses, board president of the Ohio History Connection



Kimberly Murnieks, director of Ohio’s Office of Budget and Management

Paul Oyaski, former mayor of Euclid, and former director of Cuyahoga County’s Department of Development

Elizabeth Pierce, executive director of the Cincinnati Museum Center

Sharetta Smith, Mayor of Lima

Ted Strickland, former governor of Ohio and former member of Congress

Samantha Turner, Youngstown city councilwoman

Ginger Warner, board chair of the Ohio Arts Council

Sarah Wickham, director of TourismOhio

Mackensie Wittmer, executive director of the National Aviation Heritage Area

Ex-Officio, and commission secretary
Megan Wood, executive director of the Ohio History Connection

COMMITTEES

We have created six thematic state-wide committees led by two co-chairs with representation from at least one member of the America 250-Ohio Commission.

- **88-County Engagement Committee**, co-chairs: Samantha Turner, Youngstown councilwoman, Cheryl Subler, executive director of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio
- **Education Committee**, co-chairs: Rep. Joe Miller and Paul LaRue, president, Ohio School Board
- **Philanthropic Partners Committee**, co-chairs: Douglas J. Preisse, partner of Van Meter, Ashbrook & Associates, Charles Bluestone, principal, Bluestone Law Group, LLC
- **Public Awareness Committee**, co-chairs: Elizabeth Pierce, executive director, Cincinnati Museum Center, Caryn Candisky, executive director, government relations, Cleveland State University
- **Signature Events and Programming Committee**, co-chairs: Melinda Huntley, executive director of Ohio Travel Association, Donna Collins, director of Ohio Arts Council, Wendy Zucal, executive director of Dennison Railroad
- **Under-told Stories Committee**, co-chairs: Kathy Dean-Dielman, board president of the Lorain County Historical Society and Frances McGee Cromartie, retired and member of the Daughters of the America Revolution.

WORKING GROUPS

- Tree planting
- Ohio Goes to the Movies
- 4th Grade History Pass
- Recognizing Revolutionary War veterans graves
- Trains and transportation
- Supplemental school materials
- Statewide tourism trails
- Northwest Ordinance

America 250-Ohio staff

Todd Kleismit, executive director

Chris Hurtubise, communications director

Abby Reynolds, executive assistant

Taylor Tomu, outreach and engagement specialist

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Todd Kleismit
Executive Director

When we reach 2026, the nation's 250th anniversary, I am certain we will reflect upon 2023 as the crucial time when we laid the groundwork for success and started building momentum.

The Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial (America 250-Ohio) began 2023 with a new logo and an abundance of ideas that we captured in our "Recommendations to the People of Ohio" that was produced in late 2022. March was a pivotal time as we introduced our new logo at the annual Statehood Day event at the Ohio Statehouse with Governor Mike DeWine and with the support of the Outdoor Advertising Association of Ohio, which sponsored a digital billboard advertising campaign in support of our work. Our Commission also met in March at the National Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus.

I then represented Ohio at a convening of national America 250 leaders in Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia where we shared information and ideas – and Ohio had established itself as among those leading the way in preparing for the country's 250th anniversary.

The Ohio General Assembly expressed its support of the Commission by unanimously adopting concurrent resolutions (House Concurrent Resolution 5 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 5) and approving \$2 million in operating support for FY 2024 and \$3 million in FY 2025 for the Commission.

While confident in our work and with the support of Ohio leaders, we recognized that most Ohioans had not given much thought to the upcoming 250th anniversary or how it would be relevant to their everyday lives. So, we rolled up our sleeves and started building momentum and public awareness across the state. We traveled to Sandusky, Norwalk, Ashland, Wooster, Youngstown, Nelsonville, Lancaster, Napoleon, Cincinnati, Dayton, Newark, Bowling Green, New Philadelphia, Wellington, Wilmot, Findlay, Zanesville, Wapakoneta, Jackson Center, Chillicothe, Greenville, the Ohio State Fair, and many places in between sharing the opportunities for collaboration with countless Ohioans.

We made connections with Ohio's elected leaders as well as regular citizens. We've begun making plans with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) as well as the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR). We also connected with representatives from many of the American Indian tribes that have Ohio ties. We met with librarians, historians, educators, tourism professionals, genealogists, archivists, museum professionals, transportation experts, environmental stewards, members of the media and many more.

I am especially pleased with the momentum we've built with the communities along the aptly named U.S. Route 250 that stretches for more than 200 miles within Ohio from Sandusky along Lake Erie to Bridgeport and the Ohio River (U.S. Route 250 continues into West Virginia and Virginia). We commissioned a barn painting of our logo on a Wayne County barn located along U.S. Route 250 in June, painted by The Barn Artist Scott Hagan – well known for his previous work on the Ohio Bicentennial Barns. We anticipate a lot of America 250-related activities to occur in the communities along this scenic stretch of Ohio that include Sandusky, Milan, Norwalk, Ashland, Wooster, New Philadelphia, Dennison, Cadiz, and others.

We could not have built this momentum without the strong support of our Commission members and a small, but mighty team featuring Communications Director Chris Hurtubise, Community Engagement and Outreach Specialist Taylor Tomu and Executive Assistant Abby Reynolds. Special thanks to Jodie Engle, a former team member who made significant contributions in 2023.

I am pleased with our momentum and am excited about the work that lies ahead for us as we get closer to 2026 and our national celebration. There will be an abundance of events and activities across the country and here in Ohio. What most excites me is this opportunity to use our America 250-Ohio platform to help bring people together to do some meaningful work in collaboration and to instill in our young people that these United States of America – and Ohio's place in this great national experiment – is worth preserving and celebrating.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Todd Kleismit".

Todd Kleismit, *Executive Director*

Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial





Bucyrus Bratwurst Festival Queens with “The Emblem” at New Philadelphia First Town Days, June 2023.



Find out more about the Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial online:

<https://america250-ohio.org>

#America250Ohio

41 S. High Street, Suite 250 | Columbus, Ohio 43215 | (614) 324-9954