



Generating Excitement for 2026







ANNUAL REPORT | 2024

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





he Commission spent much of 2024 generating excitement for the nation's upcoming semiquincentennial. Reflecting on an active past year, I am proud of what our Commission members, staff and stakeholders achieved to position Ohio for a leading role in the nation's 250th anniversary just one year away. Here are just a few of the highlights:

- Approved \$1 million in grants to 84 organizations in more than 50 counties
- Launched/announced several new initiatives that are led by the Commission's committees and staff: 4th Grade History Pass, Ohio Goes to the Movies, Trails & Tales and Ohio's Homecoming & Picnics
- · Hired three new full-time team members
- Dedicated a new America 250-Ohio barn the med to Ohio agriculture –
 in Sandusky County and a building mural at American Nitrile in Grove City
- Engaged thousands of Ohioans at the Ohio State Fair many thanks to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for allowing us some space!
- Helped support a first-ever gathering of Ohio's Underground Railroad sites (did you know Ohio has more than any other state?)
- Secured a Visionary Partnership with Cenovus Energy We are grateful for their transformational support!

We traveled throughout Ohio generating excitement in every region, visiting communities and organizations that are busy making plans to participate in the nation's upcoming anniversary. I am pleased to report that more than 100 local communities have so far been designated as "America 250-Ohio Communities," and are busy making plans to participate in the 250th anniversary at the county, city, village and township levels.

I remain grateful to our staff, Commission members and countless others who are incredibly dedicated to the work of the Commission and ensuring Ohio and Ohioans embrace this once-in-a-generation opportunity in all corners of the state. Finally, a special thanks to Governor Mike DeWine, his team and our friends who serve our state in the Ohio General Assembly. We could not carry out this work without the State of Ohio and the people in public service. We look forward to continuing this journey toward 2026 with all of you.

Looking forward to 2026!

Toda Kleismit

Todd Kleismit , Executive Director

Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial

LETTER FROM THE AMERICA 250-OHIO CO-CHAIRS

hio holds a special place in our nation's history and we're confident that Ohio will continue to be an important part of America's future, too! Ohio is the first state to emerge from the Northwest Territory and a place where over 7,000 Revolutionary War Veterans and their families would come to settle. Ohio has numerous touch points to the era of the American Revolution. While Ohio's statehood came 27 years after the Declaration of Independence, Ohio became a model for the future nation.

Today Ohio is producing leadership in this national effort to celebrate the milestone birthday of the United States in 2026. One of the most important ways the Commission has been generating excitement for the 250th has been sharing the monthly themes for how Ohio will approach 2026. Consider joining us as we look at these ways to connect and highlight Ohio strengths:

January: Ohio Firsts & Originals

February: Busine<mark>ss, Innova</mark>tion & Work

March: Music, Entertainment & Movies

April: Transportation

May: Arts, Culture & Literature

June: Natural Resources

July: Statewide Homecoming & Picnics **August**: Ohio State Fair & County Fairs

September: Sports & Recreation **October**: Food & Agriculture

November: Veterans & First Responders

December: Future Ohio

It is not possible for America 250-Ohio to carry this out alone. We need lots of partners and all 88 counties to help share this excitement and make contributions, both big and small. Ohio has such a diverse range of communities, organizations and people. There are so many ways to participate meaningfully. We hope you'll join the excitement by visiting america250-ohio.org to find out how you can participate.

To all of the stakeholders who are already engaged in this work, whether it is through the Commission, committees, volunteers, donors and other supporters, we express our sincere gratitude. To make a celebration and commemoration of this scale possible, it will take all of us together to share the story of Ohio's impact on U.S. history for over 250 years.

Thank you for all you are doing and will be doing in the coming two years as we generate excitement for 2026!

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Preisse, Co-Chair Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiguincentennial Michael B. Coleman, Co-Chair Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial We need lots
of partners
and all 88
counties to
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this excitement
and make
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Grants

hrough two funding rounds in FY '24, America 250-Ohio distributed funding to local projects throughout the state; a fall grants round that opened in October 2023 with grants awarded in January 2024 and a second spring round that opened in March 2024 with grants awarded in June 2024. In all, \$1,000,000 was distributed to 84 communities covering over 50 counties. Two grant types were offered: Buckeye Impact Grants (\$5,000-\$50,000) and Trillium Local Activity Grants (under \$5,000).

Projects ranged from Revolutionary War Veteran graves identification and restoration, historical exhibits, photography and film projects and so many others. The program was administered through a partnership with Ohio Humanities. A grants panel comprised of Commissioners and volunteer stakeholders reviewed applications and made recommendations for the grant awards.







2

Funding Rounds for FY '24

Fall 2023 - Awarded January 2024 **Spring 2024** - Awarded June 2024

249

Applications Received

75 applications – Fall **174 applications** – Spring

84

Grants Awarded

23 Communities in 15 counties – Fall61 Communities in 37 counties – Spring

\$1M

Funds Awarded

\$400,000 – Fall **\$600,000** – Spring

60

News Stories/Potential Reach

33 news stories/2.2M potential reach – Fall **27** news stories/**37.7M** potential reach – Spring

America 250-Ohio Communities

he America 250-Ohio Communities program provides important opportunities for local leaders across the state to network, partner and exchange ideas. Communities are the first to learn about and participate in state commission-led programs, receive resources like digital toolkits, and will receive special recognition as an official America 250-Ohio Community. Over 100 Communities have signed up to date and our goal is to reach 250.

Communities designate local liaisons to work closely with the America 250-Ohio staff, who provide information to help them plan and coordinate, make connections and access resources.

Thanks to generous support from Neighborhood Strategies for supporting the official America 250-Ohio Communities program.



"America 250 is a seminal event that aligns with our mission to support vibrant, thriving communities," said Jim Lenner, President + CEO of Neighborhood Strategies. "We are honored to contribute to this historic celebration and to be part of a nationwide effort that encourages reflection, celebration, and aspiration for the next 250 years."





Example of a customized logo provided to communities



FAST FACTS

October 2023 - Launch

- 100+ Communities to date
- Communities of all sizes are signing up
- Commemorative Ohio-made flags provided upon approval

COMMITTEE:

88-County Engagement

PROJECT LEADERS:

Samantha Turner, Youngstown City Councilwoman Cheryl Subler, County Commissioners Association of Ohio

STAFF LIAISON: Taylor Tomu

Trails & Tales

ith goals of inspiring collaboration and increasing traveler spending in local communities, America 250-Ohio's Trails & Tales celebrate Ohio's achievements. Six statewide tourism trails will be introduced between 2024-2026. These trails explore Ohio's contributions to Air & Space, Creativity, Innovation, Leadership, Transportation and Ohio's waterways.

The trails are called "Trails & Tales" as they feature real-life stories of Ohioans and their contributions that align with the trail's theme. Through these stories and on-site experiences, visitors will have a greater appreciation of Ohio's role in shaping U.S. history; past, present and future.

Each trail offers unique experiences supported by interactive maps, GPS audio tours, signage and marketing support, boosting tourism and local economies. The first, the Ohio Air & Space Trail, highlights Ohio's aviation and aerospace innovations, from the first practical airplane to space travel advancements, showcasing the state's role in training, preservation, and military aviation.



Ohio Air & Space Trail Highlights:

- · Seven themes for visitors to explore.
- 179 employees and volunteers at trail sites trained on the trail and themes.
- 64% of Ohio Air & Space Trails sites have seen increased visitation.

The first of these trails, the Ohio Air & Space Trail, launched in May 2024, marking the start of a program set to deepen appreciation for Ohio's rich heritage.

FAST FACTS

May 9, 2024- Launch

- 34 sites/57 Partner Organizations
- 21 Counties
- 5 Million Media Impressions



We are honored to be part of the Ohio Air & Space Trail! Aviation History and innovation has its roots (and continues to advance) in Ohio, and we are proud to play a role in educating and inspiring the public about this.

- Wright B. Flyer, Inc.

COMMITTEE:

Signature Events & Programming

PROJECT LEADERS:

Melinda Huntley, Ohio Travel Association

Lance Woodworth, Destination Toledo

STAFF LIAISONS: Chris Hurtubise, Abby Reynolds



Ohio Goes to the Movies

In 2026, Ohio will come alive with movie magic! As a Signature Event of America 250-Ohio, "Ohio Goes to the Movies" (OGTTM) will celebrate the state's contributions to American filmmaking. Starting on Valentine's Day 2026 and spanning 250 days, this statewide event will honor Ohio's rich cinematic legacy in all 88 counties.

Through screenings of films featuring Ohio-connected actors, directors, writers and animators, as well as movies made in or about Ohio, OGTTM will spotlight the state's pivotal role in the film industry. From historic classics to modern hits, this celebration will connect communities through the power of cinema. Join us as Ohio's unique place in movie history takes center stage, creating an unforgettable experience for film lovers everywhere!



As a statewide movie series, Ohio Goes to the Movies is showcasing Ohio's contribution to filmmaking on a never-seen-before scale.



FAST FACTS

May 1, 2024 Launch

- 106 Venue Partners to date
- 58 Counties
- Over 9 Million Media
 Impressions

Ohio Goes to the Movies Highlights:

- · Sold-out Premiere Event on May 1, 2024
- Creation of first-ever Ohio Movie Database (OMD)
- Promotional trailer with Beverly D'Angelo and Gov.
 & Mrs. DeWine
- Key partnerships:
 - National Association of Theater Operators
 - Motion Picture Association of America
 - Ohio Restaurant and Hospitality Alliance
 - Ohio film commissions
 - Ohio film festivals
 - Universities and film professors

COMMITTEE:

Signature Events & Programming

PROJECT LEADERS:

Stephen George, Ohio History Connection
Molly Kreuzman, America 250-Ohio/OGTTM

STAFF LIAISONS: Ouanta Brown, Chris Hurtubise



Ohio's Homecoming & Picnics

n July 2026, Ohioans are invited to celebrate freedom, history, and community with Ohio's Homecoming & Picnics. Families, organizations, and communities can gather for food and fun. Homecoming kits will help groups organize their own picnics, honoring Ohio's contributions to U.S. history and the nation's 250th anniversary. Cenovus Energy is the presenting sponsor of Ohio's Homecoming & Picnics, and their contribution will help fund the homecoming kits development and distribution.



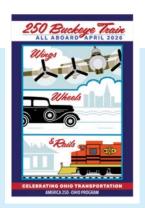
COMMITTEE: Signature Events & Programming
PROJECT LEADER: Megan Wood, Ohio History Connection
STAFF LIAISON: Abby Reynolds



250 Buckeye Train & Transportation Celebration

eparting from Columbus, a restored 1940's passenger train will embark with passengers, special guests, and elected officials. The journey from Columbus to Dennison in April 2026, will allow travelers to witness a century of aviation history from their seats. Upon arriving in Dennison, passengers will enjoy lunch and explore an auto show featuring over 250 vehicles that highlight Ohio's automotive legacy. A two-hour break includes a USO show, WWII reenactors, a Servicemen's Canteen, and Operation Lifesaver activities. As the train returns to Columbus, vintage aircraft will perform an airshow, making this event a key part of Ohio's 250th celebration. A second day trip from Newark to Dennison and back will be offered the following day, complete with the transportation celebration.



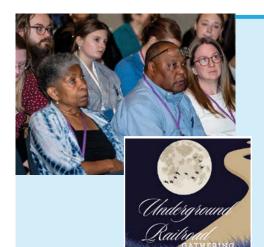




COMMITTEE: Signature Events & Programming PROJECT LEADERS: Wendy Zucal, Dennison Depot, Jason Johnson, Lauren International STAFF LIAISON: Chris Hurtubise

MORE 2024 PROGRAMS

In 2024, we introduced several new initiatives and projects such as a day-long gathering to explore Ohio's significant role in aiding freedom seekers to safety, commemorating Ohio history through mural art or encouraging families with fourth grade students to explore Ohio history sites – these programs are sure to have a long-lasting impact. Learn more about these programs at america250-ohio.org



Underground Railroad Gathering

Ohio has the most Underground Railroad sites certified on the National Park Service's National Network to Freedom Trail. On September 23, 2024, Ohio sites dedicated to Underground Railroad history gathered for a day-long event at the Ohio History Center, hosted by America 250-Ohio and the National Park Service. Over 130 attendees participated in a day of learning, discussion and idea-sharing, with speakers highlighting unique efforts from organizations across the state.

COMMITTEE: Under-Told Stories

CO-CHAIRS: Kathy Dean-Dielman, Lorain County Historical Society, Frances McGee Cromartie, Community volunteer and former judge

STAFF LIAISON: Taylor Tomu

Barn and Building Murals

Following the success of the first barn mural in 2023, we had two additional barn/building murals created in 2024. One is the Miarer family farm featuring an Ohio agricultural theme, located in Fremont, Ohio. The other is the American Nitrile building mural, honoring veterans and their service. We plan to have 2-3 additional barn murals completed in 2025-2026.





4th Grade History Pass

Introduced in February 2024, the 4th Grade History Pass provides free admission for Ohio 4th Grade students with a paid adult, to over 40 history-related museums and sites across the state of Ohio. The program will provide each year's 4th graders with this offer through 2027. To date the pass has been downloaded over 2,000 times.

COMMITTEE: Public Awareness

CO-CHAIRS: Elizabeth Pierce, Cincinnati Museum Center,

Caryn Candisky, Cleveland State University

STAFF LIAISON: Chris Hurtubise

LOOKING FORWARD: 2025-2026 PROJECTS

Te're not waiting until 2026 to celebrate and commemorate the 250th anniversary. In addition to the projects that were introduced in 2024, we have several notable, statewide projects scheduled to launch in 2025. This work would not be possible without the dedicated professionals who are serving as volunteer committee members and project leaders.

Next Gen Citizens/Education Programs

Next Generation Citizens of Ohio empowers students and educators with tools to foster civic engagement, celebrate Ohio's history, and inspire active citizenship. Serving upper elementary to high school students, it provides statewide programs and resources that equip educators to deliver impactful civics education and meaningful learning experiences.

COMMITTEE: Next Gen/Education

CO-CHAIRS: Rep. Joe Miller, Ohio General Assembly,

Paul LaRue, Ohio State Board of Education

STAFF LIAISON: Taylor Tomu







Under-Told Stories Monthly Blogs

Discover Ohio's untold legacy in our new monthly blog series beginning in January 2025. Each installment will highlight a different Ohioan, past and present who have made contributions to Ohio and U.S. History over the past 250+ years. From hidden heroes to groundbreaking pioneers, readers will explore the inspiring stories of individuals whose contributions continue to influence our nation's journey.

COMMITTEE: Under-Told Stories

CO-CHAIRS: Kathy Dean-Dielman, Lorain County Historical Society, Frances McGee Cromartie, Community volunteer and former judge

STAFF LIAISON: Taylor Tomu

Creativity Trails & Tales – January 2025 Ohio Waterways Trails & Tales – May 2025

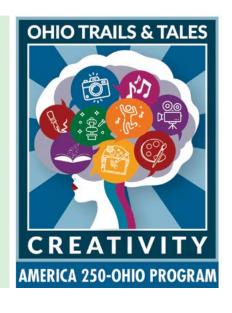
Launching in 2025, the Ohio Creativity Trail showcases over 100 artistic sites across six genres, inspiring creativity through history and modern art. A waterways trail highlighting Lake Erie, the Ohio River and canals, will be introduced. This trail will highlight their role in shaping Ohio's commerce, culture, and community. Explore and connect with Ohio's stories through Trails & Tales.

COMMITTEE: Signature Events & Programming

PROJECT LEADERS: Melinda Huntley, Ohio Travel Association,

Lance Woodworth, Destination Toledo

STAFF LIAISONS: Chris Hurtubise, Abby Reynolds



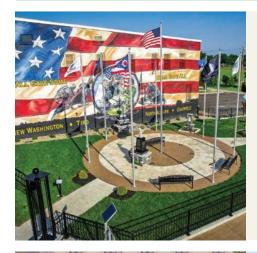
Heritage Trees: Planting History - Spring 2025

Trees are living history and planting a tree is a way to honor Ohio's past, shape the present and establish our environmental future. Heritage Trees: Planting History is an effort to plant a native Ohio Oak tree in each of the 88 counties. The tree planting will commemorate the history of the location and include local leaders, elected officials and their respective America 250-Ohio Community members. Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor, Cenvous Energy.

PROJECT LEADER: Leslie Wagner, Dawes Arboretum

STAFF LIAISON: Quanta Brown





Murals Across Ohio - Spring 2025

Community murals celebrate public art, showcase local talent and share cherished stories across Ohio. These murals beautify spaces, foster civic pride, and honor Ohio's contributions to the nation's history and future. As part of the Statewide Mural Recognition Program, murals will be identified with America 250-Ohio vinyl stickers. The America 250-Ohio website will feature an online map and driving guide, highlighting the richness of Ohio's communities through visual storytelling.

COMMITTEE: Signature Events & Programming **PROJECT LEADER:** Donna Collins, Ohio Arts Council

STAFF LIAISON: Chris Hurtubise



Ohio Women's Suffrage Monument - Fall 2026

Together with the Ohio Women's Suffrage Monument Commission and Capitol Square Foundation – America 250-Ohio supports the design, fabrication, and installation of a monument to serve as a memorial to help Ohioans and visitors to the Ohio Statehouse understand the history of the women's suffrage movement, and that even still today, we continue to work toward equality for all people.

COMMITTEE: Signature Events & Programming
PROJECT LEADER: Donna Collins, Ohio Arts Council

STAFF LIAISON: Todd Kleismit

Revolutionary War Veteran Graves Identification and Recognition Project

Ohio is the final resting place for over 7,000 Revolutionary War Veterans graves. The Revolutionary War Veterans Graves Identification and Recognition Project will work to identify, catalog and create a comprehensive and searchable database as well as a digital map that can be accessed online. The project may include some grave recognitions and cemetery markers.

PROJECT LEADERS: Krista Horrocks, Ohio History Connection,

Tom Hankins, Hocking Valley SAR Chapter

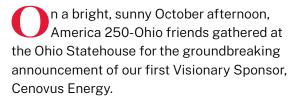
STAFF LIAISON: Quanta Brown



ANNOUNCING FIRST VISIONARY SPONSOR

CEJOVUS





Cenovus's transformational investment will support a new signature program called Ohio's Homecoming & Picnics, which was also announced at the event by Governor Mike DeWine and Eric Zimpfer, Cenovus Senior Vice President, U.S. Refining.



We are proud to partner with America 250-Ohio to inspire Ohioans across the state to gather and celebrate in July 2026," said Eric Zimpfer, from Cenovus. "We are dedicated to energizing the world to make people's lives better and our sponsorship of Ohio's Homecoming and Picnics demonstrates our belief in and appreciation of the communities across the state that we serve."







The announcement involved a picnic-style gathering with lunch, nostalgic lawn games, a special program and music by members of Columbus Youth Jazz Orchestra.

Our Supporters: We Salute You

Te are so grateful to our donors for their generous support of America 250-Ohio. Their support is instrumental to our work and makes important programs possible, including our 4th Grade History Pass which provides greater access to history museums for students; heritage tree plantings across all 88 counties; documenting and sharing under-told stories; and researching and recording Ohio's 7,000+ Revolutionary War Veterans graves. Together, we are creating a 250th celebration that Ohioans will cherish and remember for generations to come.

Visionary Sponsor

Cenovus Energy

\$10.000 - \$24.999

Neighborhood Strategies Ginger Warner

\$5,000 - \$9,999

American Nitrile

\$1,000 - \$4,499

Charles Bluestone Bill Dingus Neil & Christine Mortine Ted Prasse

\$250 - \$999

Andrew Allen
Frances McGee Cromartie
Drs. John & Barbara Fleming
Melinda Huntley
Chris Hurtubise
Chris & Kristine Konik
Todd Kleismit & Lisa Defendiefer
Adam Levine
Stephanie McManus & Greg Renda
Charley & Ann Moses
Kim Murnieks
Elizabeth Pierce
Mackensie Wittmer

\$1 - 249

Rebecca Asmo
Donna Collins
Kathryn Dean-Dielman
Kelly Falcone-Hall
Nancy Putnam Hollister
Anthony Gibbs
Holly Brians Ragusa
Megan Wood
Worthington DAR Chapter
Scott & Carolynn Ziance



Thank you to all of the community leaders who are serving as volunteers on various committees. We want to recognize those who are serving as co-chairs alongside a Commission member.

America 250-Ohio Committee Co-Chairs

88-COUNTY ENGAGEMENT CO-CHAIRS: Samantha Turner and Cheryl Subler

EDUCATION CO-CHAIRS: Rep. Joe Miller and Paul LaRue

PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS CO-CHAIRS: Doug Preisse and Charles Bluestone

PUBLIC AWARENESS CO-CHAIRS: Elizabeth Pierce and Caryn Candisky

SIGNATURE EVENTS TRI-CHAIRS: Melinda Huntley, Donna Collins and Wendy Zucal UNDER-TOLD STORIES CO-CHAIRS: Kathy Dean-Dielman and Frances McGee Cromartie

2024 Commissioners

Chris Abbuhl, Tuscarawas County Commissioner and President of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio

State Sen. Hearcel Craig, Ohio Senate

Michael B. Coleman, Commission Co-Chair, Former Mayor of Columbus, OH and Partner at Ice Miller LCC.

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, Under-Told Stories Committee Co-Chair

Kelly Falcone-Hall, President & CEO 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, Signature Events & Programming Tri-Chair

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

State Rep. Joe Miller, Ohio House of Representatives, Education Committee Co-Chair

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, Public Awareness Co-Chair

Doug Preisse, Commission Co-Chair, Principal at Van Meter-Ashbrook & Associates, Philanthropic Partners Committee Co-Chair

Sharetta Smith, Mayor of Lima

Ted Strickland, Former Governor of Ohio and Former Member of Congress

Samantha Turner, Youngstown Councilwoman, 88-County Engagement Committee Co-Chair

Ginger Warner, Chair of the Ohio Arts Council

Sarah Wickham, State Tourism Director

Mackensie Wittmer, Executive Director of the National Aviation Heritage Area

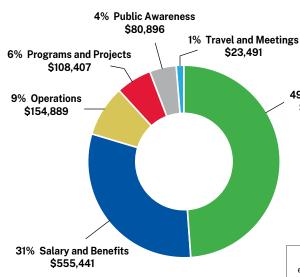
Megan Wood, Executive Director of the Ohio History Connection, Ex-Officio, and Commission Secretary

FY '24 Expenditures

FY '24 Budget \$2,000,000 FY '24 Total Revenue was \$2,028,826 with contributions

Financials

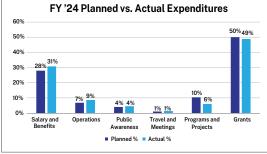




FY '24 actual expenditures were very close to what was budgeted at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Increased expenditures on Salary and Benefits was due to expanding the commission staff during the fiscal year.

*Due to timing, some approved grant funding was distributed in FY '25.



49% Grants*

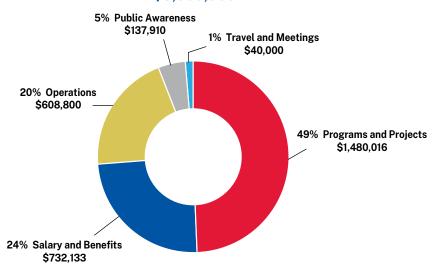
\$881,790

Biennial FY '25 Budget

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

FY '25 GRF Budget \$3,000,000

FY '25 Budget – Planned Expenditures \$3,000,000



AMERICA 250-OHIO BOOTH Ohio State Fair 2024



Highlights:

- 10 Days at the Fair/90 hours
- Greeted 5,000+ fairgoers
- Two visits by George Washington*
- Visits from the Hocking County SAR Chapter
- 30+ Volunteers
- Tons of fun!

*A special thank you to Dale Fellows and Curt Radabaugh, our General Washington reenactors





Our sincere thanks to our hosts - the Ohio Department of Natural Resources